

Origins/GenCon Issue

CHALLENGE 63

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming US \$3.50

MERC: 2000™

Dark Angel of the Night

Robert James Christensen

MEGATRAVELLER™

Shen Wings

Terrence F. McInnes

CALL OF CTHULHU®

From the Trenches

Adam Geibel



GDW



TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE...

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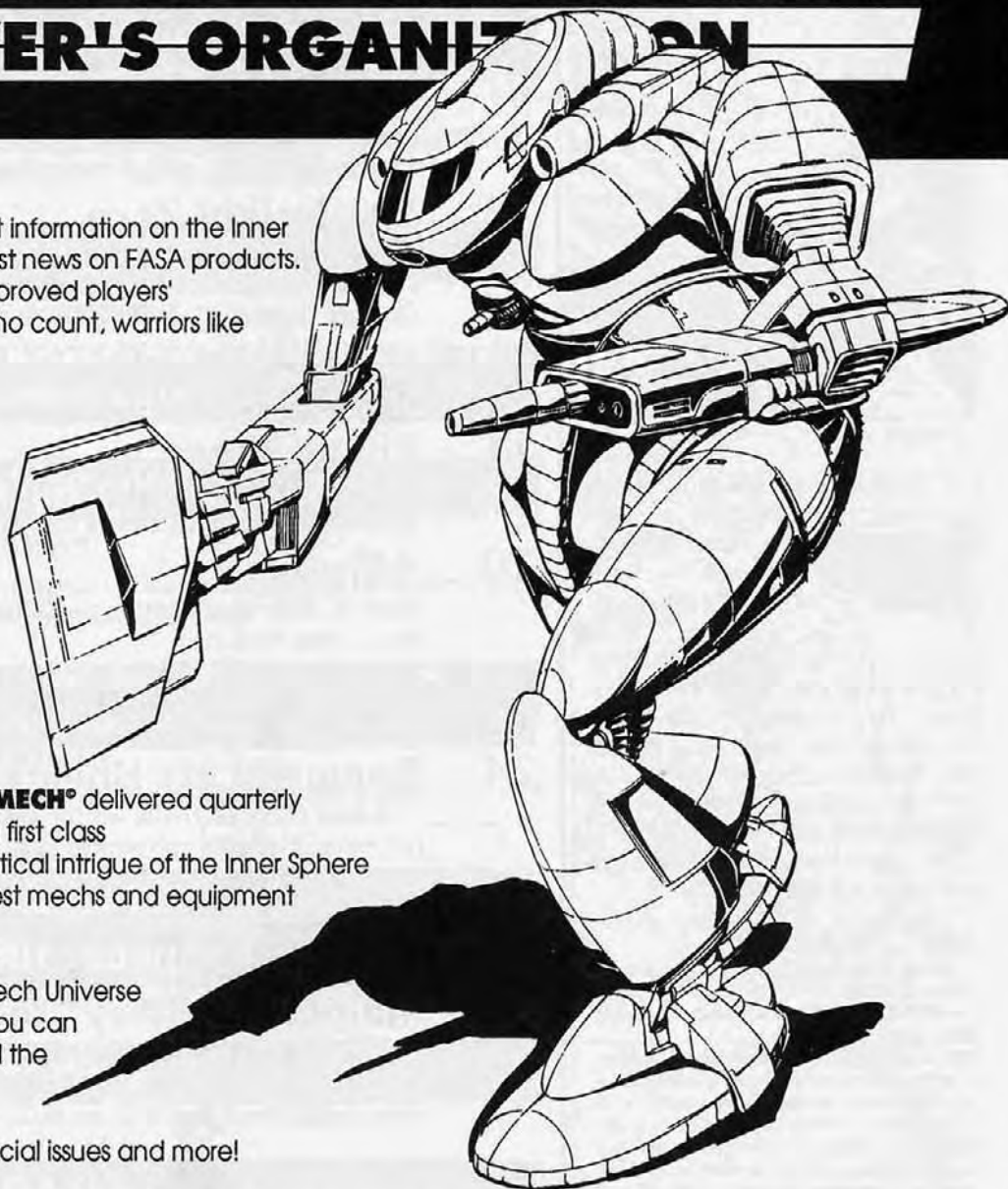
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Challenge, the magazine of science-fiction gaming, is published monthly.

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The issue price is \$3.50. Six issues are \$15 in the US and Canada. Foreign subscriptions (outside the US and Canada, but not to APO or FPO addresses) by surface mail are \$30 per six issues. Please make all payments in US funds drawn on a US bank.

Submissions: We welcome articles and illustrations for **Challenge**. Please inquire before submitting manuscripts, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope. We will send submission guidelines. Address all manuscripts to the managing editor and art portfolios to the art director, c/o **Challenge**. Foreign inquiries (except APO/FPO) please include an International Reply Coupon.

CHALLENGE

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

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FROM THE MANAGEMENT

Hi. I'm the ghost art director that you have been seeing in the last few issues of **Challenge**. After one more issue, Steve Bryant will be back and watch out! He's coming back with a bunch of new ideas and a great new look for the magazine. **Challenge** has been a real great experience, but I am kind of glad it's almost over. Steve has taught me how to handle the everyday crises of a monthly magazine. There are advertisement deadlines, editorial problems, adding new pages at the last minute, and no time to get the cover or the logos for the issue done. It has been *real fun Steve!* It's your baby once again.

However, call me insane. I am going to be an art director once again. This time it's on our new magazine, the **Journeys™** journal. I guess you could say I can't get enough of the spotlight. GDW has graced us with the presence of another magazine, and I am going to make it the flashiest and hippest new thing on the market. I suggest getting a subscription now so you won't miss out on the first issue. The **Journeys** journal covers everything that **Challenge** can't. For instance, fantasy; since we are doing a multigenre game that has fantasy, we just had to have a magazine to cover it. The editor is Lester Smith and between him, me and our marketing assistant Michael Krause, it is going to be a really interesting ride.

Steve, I thank you for letting me have this great opportunity. I only hope that I was able to match the highest standards that you have set for **Challenge** in the past, and will continue to set in the future.

Amy Doubet

IN MEMORIAM

Challenge expresses its sympathy to the family and friends of Charles G. Weekes, who died Jan. 27 at Jamaica Hospital in Queens, NY.

Weekes had been a contributor to **Challenge** for some time. One of his articles, "Dooley's Doughnuts" for *Star Trek*, is presented in this issue.

APRIL FOOLS ISSUE

I enjoyed the April Fools issue very much. (It arrived on the first, no less.) The mix of serious and humorous articles was just right, with neither one dominating. Especially enjoyable were the special insert's "regular features," which were a great sendup of what we see every month, and the cover, which was particularly striking.

Greg Videll
Laurel, MD

T2K ID SKILL, PART II

I wish to suggest an alternative to the Identification skill proposed by RD Crofts in his article "A Question of Identity" in Issue 59. Crofts suggests the creation of a new Education skill to be used for identifying military equipment. He discusses several aspects about equipment recognition, all of which I agree on. My alternative is to use the skills that exist as a basis for determining recognition of equipment.

Crofts' skill serves only military equipment. However, there is also civilian equipment of all types to account for—from computers to civilian spacecraft. There is also the more practical point that in *Twilight: 2000*, characters start with a limited number of skill points which can be put to better use than measuring knowledge already inferred by the character's collection of skills.

Rather than waste skill levels to mirror an expertise (if not an interest) that is already shown, I suggest using the skill itself averaged with the higher of INT or EDU. The skill level itself portrays the character's knowledge of a given subject. INT or EDU can represent how much extra information a character has learned and retained about a given subject. For example, a character with a high skill level in Electronics, but a low level of EDU and INT, knows his circuitry by rote. He may be a fine craftsman, but pays little attention to trade magazines or has retained little of what he has read.

Similarly, a character with a high EDU and a low (or non-existent) skill represents someone who may read a lot and can identify many items from their descriptions: "Of course, it's an Alouette. See those side-bladders? I remember an

article about the '94 Paris airshow going ga-ga over how cool they looked."

An advantage to this method is that this method is more widely applicable than to identifying only military equipment without requiring additional skills. For instance, Horsemanship can be used to identify a style of horse tack ("No, they weren't Cossacks; they were Magyars from Hungary; no Cossack would be caught dead in such a saddle.") or Mechanic could be used to determine the level of wear on an engine ("Listen to that whine. I bet we can outrun it on foot. It's about 30 seconds away from bearing failure.")

I would add only a few more modifications for visibility and information sought: Add +1 to roll if someone with military training is trying to identify military equipment.

Consider a factor for the relative obscurity of the information. The difference between a T-90 tank and an M1A1 is easier to notice and identify than the difference between an M1 and an M1A1. Similarly, it will be less likely that a tribesman in **Cadillacs & Dinosaurs** will identify a piece of equipment he has read about but not seen before.

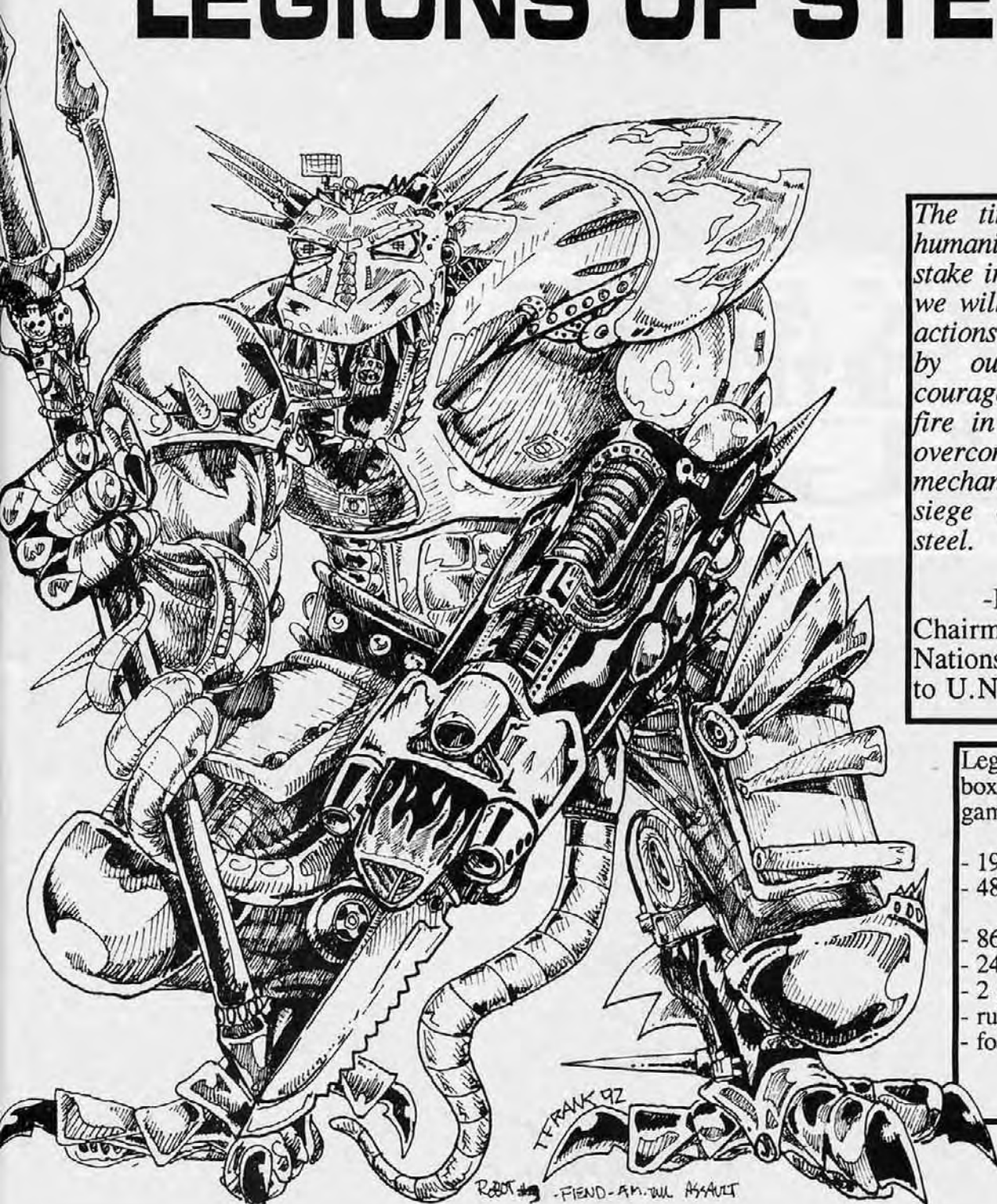
Consider information available through all the senses. In a firefight, a trained NATO soldier (or modern mercenary) won't need to see the AK47 to know that it is being fired at him. Similarly, a doctor or medic may well be able to recognize captured medicines by smell if the labels are in an unknown alphabet, or a good mechanic may well notice a clutch being burnt out at 30 meters.

To me, using this method of determining identification skills uses the skills the character has already built up. His ability to identify items, both military and otherwise, will reflect the abilities the player designed into the character.

Mitchell Schwartz
Medway, MA

Challenge magazine welcomes your letters. The opinions presented do not necessarily reflect those of the magazine. **Challenge** reserves the right to edit letters. Write to **Challenge** Letters, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.

LEGIONS OF STEEL^{T.M.}



The time has come for humanity to make its stake in the future. Where we will be judged by our actions and remembered by our deeds. With courage in our hearts and fire in our soul we will overcome this siege of mechanical horror. This siege of the legions of steel.

-Edward Sullivan,
Chairman of the United Nations of Earth speaking to U.N.E. troops.

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DARK ANGEL OF THE NIGHT

By Robert James Christensen

Kathryn DeCavour has been kidnapped. The rock world is shaken.

**K**

athryn DeCavour of the progressive music group Nachtuhi is kidnapped after a concert. The rock world is shaken. Authorities are befuddled. Only a courageous and wily band of mercs can get her back alive.

The PCs are contacted by Georgia-based merc recruiter Bill Crittenden. Somehow, he came across evidence that a merc unit was hired to carry out a "major snatch job" by one his more unscrupulous competitors, George McClan. Crittenden offered his assistance to Nachtuhi manager Roosevelt Scott to get Kathryn back. Scott, along with several very famous rock musicians, is offering a substantial reward to rescue DeCavour, with \$5000 up front. Crittenden can rent the team silenced Heckler & Koch MP-5SDs and assault suits.

BACKGROUND

Nachtuhu (German for Night Owl) has a good-sized and loyal following. The music has been described by one critic as "neopsychedellic electric folk rock with an edge," although it has traces of jazz, blues, heavy metal and Asian, all with very literate lyrics. The group also has a fabulous light show.

The kidnapping took place on a Saturday night following a sell-out concert. Five Uzi-toting roughs broke into Nachtuhi's hotel as the band returned from the show.

Four security men, six hotel employees, an off-duty police officer and two friends of the group were killed. DeCavour's husband, guitarist Richard Kalmer, and five others were injured.

Boston police have exhausted all leads, and even the FBI is baffled, since no ransom was ever called for. So far, the only clues in the case are the eyewitness reports of black-clad roughs bursting into the hotel hallway, the use of 9mm ammunition, a blown-in service door, and the bodies of hotel employees in the main service stairwell. The police officer was killed when the kidnappers made their getaway in a stolen van, which later turned up abandoned in Lawrence, MA, with no prints and no further leads. The attack has been estimated to have taken just three minutes, with the main hallway assault taking just over 55 seconds. The FBI is looking into right-wing hate groups as possible culprits due to DeCavour's far-left leanings, but this trail is going nowhere.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

DeCavour is the victim of her own success. She attracted the devout attention of a mentally unstable young man, Miles Malthus, who has been a Nachtuhi fan since he was 16. After inheriting over \$10 million from his developer father, Malthus retired to the family vacation home in Maine and spent \$1 million to "acquire the permanent visitation" of his crazed devotion, DeCavour.

The family lawyer, Jason L. Smith, contacted McClan to arrange the "visit." McClan immediately got one of his most ruthless projects, the Flaming Skulls, to carry out the mission.

The Skulls tracked the band and its entourage, picked up their idiosyncrasies and habits, then made a move in Boston. Driving to Lawrence, they switched vehicles, drove to Portland and sailed to the Malthus island estate. They were under orders not to harm DeCavour in any way.

Malthus has been trying to get the affection of DeCavour by means of gifts, intellectual conversations and serenade. He insanely wants her heart and soul. She is kept in an elaborately decorated guest room, with a piano and 24-hour room service. DeCavour realizes Malthus is quite insane, no matter how polite and devoted he may seem. She has discovered that a mere pat on his hand or cheek will send her admirer into a squealing frenzy of delight.

But how long she can convince him that she is his friend—without becoming too friendly—is a troubling doubt. The Skulls are on guard day and night, and there seems to be no way off the island.

Only a courageous and wily band of mercs can get back alive.

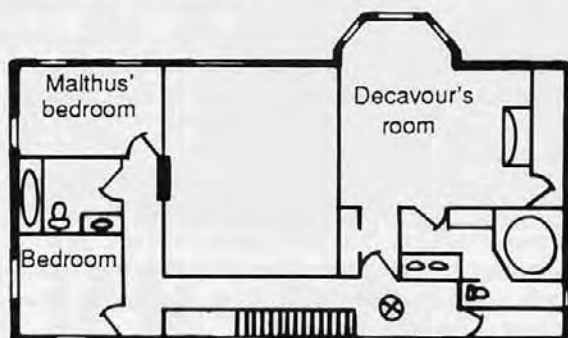
CRITTENDEN'S EVIDENCE

Crittenden's evidence consists of a photocopy of a fax sent to McClan's HQ in Havana, Cuba. The fax reads as follows: "J.S. Smith of Portland requires a 1 Mil Bag, no comebacks, for client. Details provided by Confcall:)(!%,) (@&." The symbols correspond to standard keyboard numbers (@ is 2, # is 3, etc.). The translation of the message is a \$1 million kidnap job, details in a conference call at 9:15 on Sept. 27.

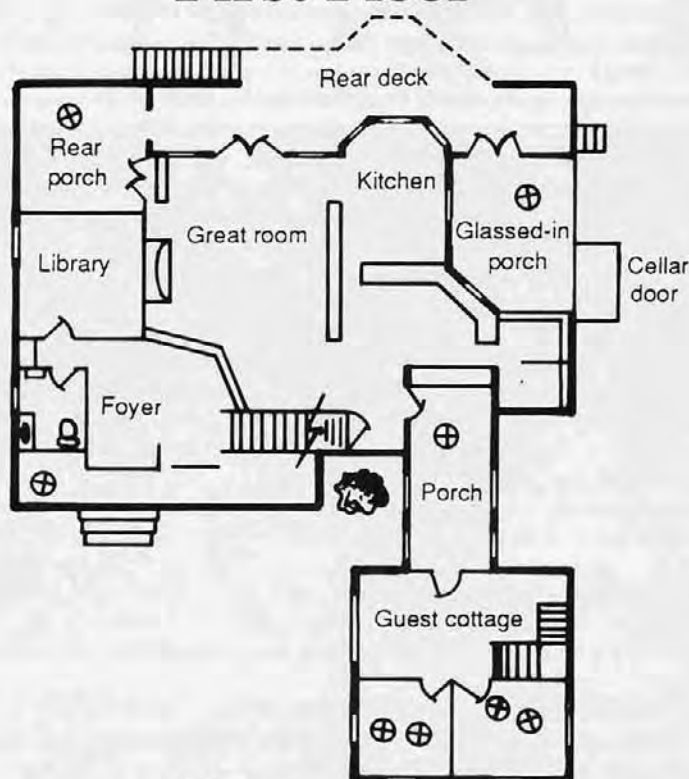
PCs with Computer 3+ can enter the phone company's computer to see which "Smith" called Havana at the time of the call.



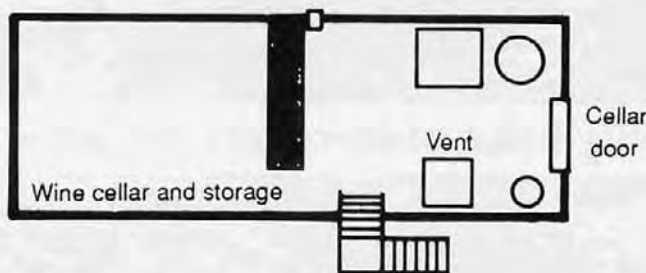
Second Floor



First Floor



Basement



Malthus Estate

McCLAN'S HEADQUARTERS

McClan's operation is located in the north-eastern part of Havana, in a rather plain building, with a bar on the street level. A barred reception window is located on the far wall. If the PCs pose as mercs looking for work and ask to see McClan, they will be given a pile of forms to fill out and told to wait. After over two hours, a large Cuban retrieves the PCs.

The office portion of the building is heavily fortified with 24-hour guards, murder holes, intruder alarms and booby traps—not an easy place to get in, or out, of. After an interview with McClan's officers, a personal interview may be granted if the team has references of renown.

McClan is in his plush office, sitting back, looking out his huge one-way window, spying on beach beauties with binoculars. He offers the PCs a shot of bourbon and starts the interview with questions on the team's specialties.

The PCs have a variety of options for trying to get information out of McClan:

If the PCs attack or threaten him, McClan will press a hidden alarm button on the chair. The room will fill with well-trained and heavily armed thugs, and the PCs will find themselves in a battle for their lives.

If the PCs try to drink McClan under the table, he may begin to brag about a hot bag in Boston, dropping the name of Jason Lewis Smith of Portland, ME.

If the PCs put McClan out with tranquilizers and search the room, they can locate a Flaming Skulls file in 5D6 minutes. A notation on the file lists Smith's Portland phone number.

SMITH'S PORTLAND OFFICE

Smith's office is in his home, located in a posh suburb of Portland. Smith and his wife, Mary, are the usual occupants of the residence. The house has an extensive home security system, overcome with an Average: Electronics or Difficult: Computer task. The PCs can locate the Malthus estate by either ransacking Smith's files, taking 3D10 minutes to locate the land title, or by interrogating Smith (Average: Interrogation).

If the neighbors become suspicious of any strange activity, they will notify police, who will arrive in only 2D10 minutes. The FBI will then take over the case, and the PCs will forfeit their reward and get jailed for burglary, while Crittenden takes an extended vacation.

Smith's file on the Malthus estate reveals the following information: Located on Harvabunk Island in Casco Bay, the estate consists of a 2500-square-foot, two-story house, a boathouse and a small barn. A 20-foot launch is tied up at the dock. The only

contact with the mainland is via a short-band radio. Electricity is provided by a basement generator, and there is a home security system.

MALTHUS' ESTATE

The shoreline of the island is rocky and mostly 10 to 15 feet above the waterline. The team will probably land by boat to get the house, which is guarded by at least two Skulls at all times. The Skulls are also equipped with IR goggles and a starlight scope.

Basement: The main entrances are the coal chute and the stairs. A large air vent for the generator under the deck can be forced open (noisily). Combined Strength needed is 16.

Guest Cottage: Connected to the main building by a glassed-in porch, the cottage has two bedrooms and a bath upstairs, and a third bedroom and small den on the ground floor. This is where the Skulls take turns sleeping and eating.

Foyer: A small covered porch with several squeaky boards. Inside the door, the floor is hard polished stone. The stairs to the second floor are next to front door, with the stairs to the basement on the other side. A guard always patrols these areas.

Great Room: A 17x21 sunken room with a high vaulted ceiling. French doors open onto the porch.

Library: The Flaming Skulls use this room as their meeting room, when necessary. The

window is set with a demo charge to discourage intruders or provide an easy escape route. Blast Damage=3D6.

Rear Porch: The guard here patrols the back deck every 10 minutes.

Rear Deck: A large wooded deck with a scenic view of the upper Casco Bay. There is a one-half-meter clearance beneath the deck.

Kitchen: Unoccupied except for meal-times (8 a.m., noon, 6 p.m.) and late-night snackers.

Glassed-In Porch: The guard stationed here alternates walking the deck with the guard stationed in room the rear porch.

Bedrooms: The southern room is empty.

Malthus' Bedroom: This room is filled with Nachtuhi-themed pictures, books and CDs.

DeCavour's Room: Decorated in an elaborate Victorian style, this room has a piano, writing desk, fireplace and small, covered deck. DeCavour is either at the piano, gazing out the north windows, sleeping or conversing with Malthus. The door is locked, and only Malthus has the key. Ironically, the outside deck door is unlocked due to the tight ground security.

ASSAULT

During an attack, Malthus will go completely mad and try to escape with DeCavour, using the island launch. He carries no weapon.

The guards are armed only with pistols

but can become fully armed in about two minutes, with 10 clips of each ammo type. Their main defensive tactic will be to hold the upstairs floors and bloody the attackers enough to force retreat or surrender (then execution). If forced outside, they will set fire to the house in order to cover their escape. If escape is impossible, they will fight to the last round.

CONCLUSION

If the PCs rescue DeCavour unharmed, they will receive money, renown and free concert passes. If Malthus is captured alive, he will spend the rest of his life in the state mental hospital. If Malthus escapes, the PCs will have a very angry and insane enemy to deal with in the future.

NPCS

Kathryn DeCavour: The intellectual soul of Nachtuhi, she enjoys singing, dancing, and playing the flute, keyboards and percussion. A pale and mysterious beauty with her long hair and tinted granny glasses, she has been married to guitarist Richard Kalmer since 1985. They have no children (but are godparents to a few dozen). She is politically liberal and quite active, but somewhat old-fashioned in her ways. She is fluent in French and German, with a spattering of Russian.

Miles Malthus: A very disturbed young man of 28, he has been a fan of Nachtuhi since he was 16. He lives off his inheritance. Having seized his long-sought after prize in

Don't just play a role...Fight!

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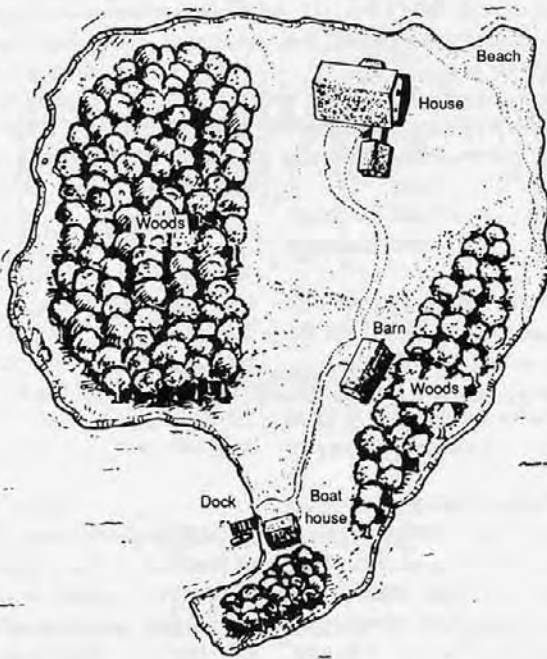
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Harvabunk Island

DeCavour, he treats her with undying affection and devotion, though he barely has the courage to touch her. To him, she is a goddess of magic and light.

Bill Crittenden: A 57-year-old Vietnam vet who became such a fanatical American Civil War buff that he has been wearing various Confederate Army uniforms since

1975. He owns and operates a chain of 15 military surplus stores throughout southern United States (Texas to North Carolina) and is the publisher of *Military Universal* magazine (read by mercs worldwide). His headquarters is located in downtown Macon, GA. He is a wily businessman with an eye for any merc mission he can organize.

George McClan: Formerly of the US Rangers, McClan went renegade after being kicked out of the army for stealing and selling weapons. Escaping from jail, he has set up his own mercenary referral company in Havana, Cuba. He specializes in very dirty jobs, hiring mostly Cubans and former gang members from America. He is not as interested in the motives of his employers—just their money.

Flaming Skulls: Murderous thugs numbed by years of violence, driven by greed and delight in taking human life. Their specialty is quick and extremely deadly raids on unsuspecting victims. The Skulls consist of two former members of the Miami Boys drug gang, two Cuban teenagers and four heavy metal biker types.

Jason Lewis Smith: Smith is a former corporate lawyer who lost most of his business scruples in the 1980s. He remains loyal to the Malthus family because he is well paid for his loyalty. Smith is a combat Novice. His contacts with McClan began with an article in "Legalities and Legislation," a Bar Association PAC newsletter. Ω

How's That?

Submitted by Floyd Zollars

Military terminology has different meanings to different branches of the military. For instance:

If you tell a navy officer to secure a building, he locks the doors and turns off the lights.

If you tell an air force officer to secure a building, he goes out and rents one.

If you tell an army officer to secure a building, he posts armed guards.

If you tell a marine to secure a building, he calls for artillery and then attacks. Ω

WRITERS GET READY!

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Rules

Write a unique **Twilight: 2000** (2nd ed.) or **Merc: 2000** adventure set in the Pacific or Asia.

Enter as many times as you like. Each entry should be less than 3000 words in length and include one or two maps. Entries must be typed, double-spaced, on standard-sized white or off-white paper. Staple each submission separately. The first page must contain the author's name, address and social security number, as well as the title of the article and the game it refers to (**Twilight** or **Merc**).

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Entries will be judged on creativity, content, organization/writing style and feasibility within the gaming universe.

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Deadline

All entries must be postmarked by October 1, 1992. Send entries to Adventure Contest, **Challenge** Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646, USA.



BATTLESIGHT

A rules variant for Twilight: 2000

By Capt. Thomas E. Mulkey, US Army (Retired)

Sniper, n. In military usage, a sharpshooter concealed to harass the enemy by picking off individual members, usually at long range with a telescopic rifle.

These optional rules were created when two problems cropped up during sessions of my regular playtest campaign.

First, one player experienced acute frustration upon being told that his character's Barret M-82 "Light Fifty" was "out of range" at 550 meters. The real Barret uses the same ammunition as the M2HB, as the player, a Special Forces sergeant in an active reserve SF group well knew. The correct battlesight zero for the M2HB is considerably greater than the 1200m extreme range given in the rulebook. Fifty-caliber MGs had been used in Vietnam and Korea to reach out and "touch" the dog tags, helmets and name tags on the fatigue shirts of unfriendlies at ranges out to and beyond three kilometers. In the single shot aimed fire role, the M2HB remains the most accurate flat-trajectory small arm in the US inventory. I resolved this reality glitch by declaring the M-82 to have a short range of 350 meters. Using optical sights and an aimed shot, the maximum effective (extreme) range becomes 2920 meters, close enough for government work.

The second problem occurred when another player character—armed with a WA-2000, a thermal imager and a Small Arms Rifle (SAR) skill of 8—discovered his chance of hitting a moving motorboat's engine with a called shot at 370 meters was a big 1. That is pretty poor shooting for an alleged "expert," considering that the boat was moving at only 14 mph (31.2 meters per phase) and that an inboard engine is as big as an average man. Rather than recalculating the range for every weapon in each of the various books, as I had begun with the M-82 in the first example, I came up with the following optional rules.

QUALIFICATIONS

Any individual with an SAR skill of 7+ qualifies as a sniper for purposes of these rules. Not everyone who is a very good shot is also a *military* sniper, a position requiring specialized training in addition to SAR 7+.

BENEFITS

A trained sniper can zero-in or "battlesight zero" individual telescope-equipped rifles and selected pistols to conform to the sniper's individual aiming idiosyncrasies and ensure high individual accuracy in his hands alone. As the sniper increases his SAR skill, he can adjust his battlesight zero to be effective at greater range.

GAME MECHANICS

Subtract 5 from the sniper's SAR and multiply the result by

the close range of any weapon the sniper has previously battlesight zeroed. The result is the effective close range for that sniper with that weapon. Treat this new close range just like that of any other weapons' close range for purposes of determining the chance of hitting for the sniper who did the zeroing only. A weapon zeroed by one individual is not considered zeroed for anyone else, even another sniper.

The rule adding 15 to a weapon's close range when a telescope is attached is suspended, but treating extreme range as long range for aimed shots with a telescope still applies.

For example, a sniper with an SAR of 8 has zeroed a Barret M-82 "Light Fifty." The original range for aimed shots using a bipod was 90m. SAR 8-5=3. Range 90x3=270 meters close range, 540 meters medium range, 1080 meters long range and 2160 meters extreme range.

Remember that aimed shots with a telescopic sight treat all extreme ranges as long for purposes of determining a hit. These ranges do not apply to quick shots or to shots from other than bipod-supported firing positions and still require one full action to aim. The 15-meter telescope bonus does not apply here, but remains in effect for nonsnipers.

It is an Easy: SAR task to set a battlesight zero on any rifle or pistol equipped with adjustable telescopic sight. It is an Average: SAR task to zero adjustable iron sights and a Difficult: SAR task to adjust factory-installed fixed iron sights. Gunsmithing skill makes each of these task rolls one level easier.

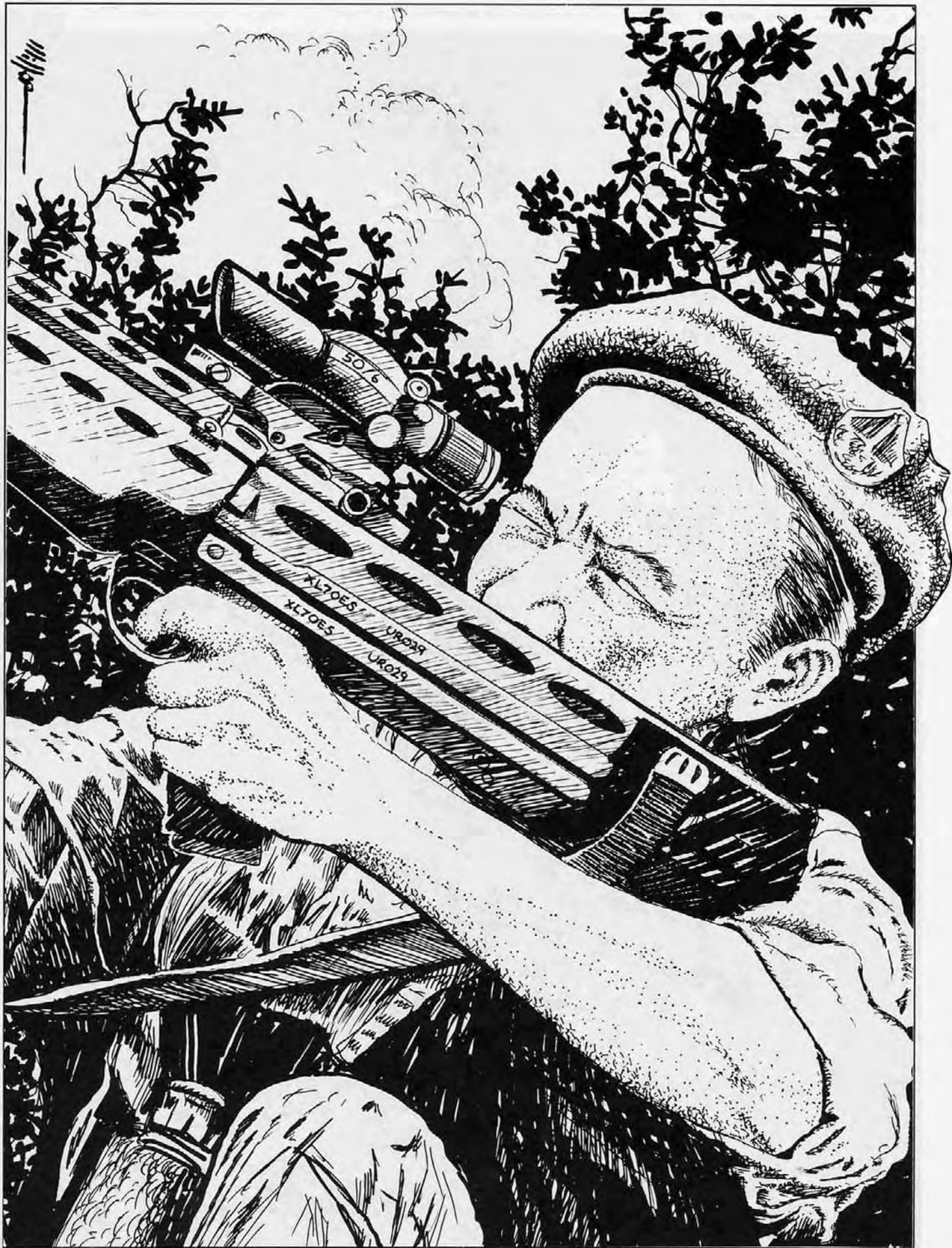
Only pistols equipped with telescopic, laser beam or adjustable iron sights or rifles may be zeroed in this manner. Iron sights welded or molded into the body of the gun may not be adjusted—they may only be allowed for by the firer, which is not the same as zeroing the sights.

Zeroing the weapon requires a minimum of five minutes, 12 rounds and access to a range having targets at distances equal to the weapon's original close range.

While any weapon with an adjustable sight can (and should) be zeroed by its regular operator, this rule expressly excludes nontelescopically equipped crossbows, pistols, hunting or target bows and all heavy weapons of any sort, with or without telescopic sights.

Quick shots and automatic fire *never* gain the benefit of zeroing. Nonsnipers still gain 15 meters to close range using telescopes, and all telescopic-aimed shots at extreme range are still considered long range to determine to-hit numbers. Ω

This article was written with the advice and suggestions of Sergeant Ross Beaver (USAR Special Forces), Specialist Jeffery Swain (ex-USA Signal Corps) and Specialist John Leight (ex-USA Signal Corps). Playtested by Largo Adventurers' Guild.



SILENT WINGS

By Terrence R. McInnes



The PCs are stuck on Vhodan, TL8 troops on a TL12 world, sitting in a startown bar with their credits running out. Aviation platoon's one remaining *Pleiku*-class light attack aircraft is sitting in a bonded warehouse at Vhodan down starport, and the PCs don't have the credits to get it out of hock. Besides, there's no work for prop flyers on a grav-powered world.

The group is what's left of Myers Marauders, once a fairly decent striker battalion that got badly chewed up by a Vargr corsair raid on Riinel. The line companies were wiped out, and only a few people in headquarters company managed to grab a ship and lift before Riinel's starport was overrun by the doggies.

The PC group should include three to six unemployed mercenaries, with at least two flyers with Propeller Aircraft skills, plus other PCs with army or marine experience. The flyer PCs should be generated with the **COACC** advanced flyer generation system. The others should be generated with either the advanced flyer system or with the mercenary advanced character generation system. Optionally, one or more PCs may be Vargr, formerly loyal to the Imperium.

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The PCs are on Vhodan/Vhodan (1208 A75898A-C), a subsector capital in Vland sector, close to the Vargr Extants in a region that has lately been hard hit by Vargr corsairs.

It's near local midnight when some colonel shows up—short, hard-as-a-rock and overwhelmingly Vilani. "Ever hear of Newcastle?" he asks. "If you're interested in getting back to work, I'll buy you a drink and tell you all about it."

If the PCs invite the newcomer to join them, they learn he is Col. Idlen Gushdemgu, who served as a platoon commander on Newcastle when it was overrun by Vargr more than 20 years ago. He has a very high-risk job on Newcastle for a group of freelancers with flying skills. He represents Lady Liri Shimii, a Vilani noble who will pay Cr1 million for successful completion of a mission.

The colonel offers the PCs a ride in his G-limo to Lady Liri's apartment in nearby Meshun City. If the PCs accept, a lushly appointed enclosed air/raft floats them to a landing flat high up on the outside of the lady's apartment tower.

Liri and five other women greet the group. Liri explains that she sponsors the Newcastle Rescue Society, a group dedicated to locating and recovering Vilani troops missing in action during the Sack of Newcastle in 1104. The society rescued a number of POWs from Newcastle right after the sack, but dozens remain unaccounted for and are

believed to be working as slave labor on the planet. One of the MIAs is believed to be Liri's brother, Capt. Idri Shimii. The five women present are wives of men believed to be held captive on Newcastle.

Liri has secretly researched the PCs' background, and because of their unique combination of skills, she believes they have the best chance of success. She reaffirms the offer of Cr1 million, plus a Cr250,000 bonus if they rescue her brother.

The PCs will be paid Cr250,000 up front as an advance against expenses. They will be reimbursed for expenses and collect the balance of the Cr1 million upon successful completion of the mission. They may keep any equipment that's in their possession at the end of the mission.

MISSION BRIEFING

If the PCs accept this ticket, Col. Gushdemgu briefs them on the mission. To ensure the mission's success, the colonel will be going along.

Newcastle: Newcastle (Newcastle/Anarsi 1801 C5567669-8) is under the control of corsair bands. The human population has been cowed into submission, although a small active underground movement still exists for the day any human navy returns to liberate the world. The underground's activities are limited to intelligence gathering and transmittal back to Vilani space by free traders with Vargr crews who are ex-Imperial Navy.

The underground reports that visiting merchant crews have seen human prisoners loading cargo at a livestock ranch in Newcastle's outback. Clandestine photos show that one prisoner resembles the patron's brother, while other prisoners resemble missing family members. The photos were taken on a ranch located on the seacoast 500 kilometers east of Seward, Newcastle's largest city. Sketchier information indicates that the prisoners are held in a guarded compound on an island in the great bay near the ranch.

Vargr Space: The PCs are to travel to Newcastle aboard a 400-ton subsidized merchant (fat trader) crewed by loyal Vargr who are veterans of the Imperial Navy. When the ship is intercepted, as it surely will be by various Vargr patrol craft and corsairs, the PCs will pose as captives, with a prize crew. The ship carries demountable, 40-ton fuel tanks, allowing it to make two jump-1 jumps without refueling.

Landing: The PCs will be clandestinely landed on Newcastle, where they will blend in with the remaining human population. They will meet members of the human underground, who will give them the possible location of the MIAs. With the help of the underground, they are to fix the location of the MIAs.

Glider: Because air travel is the only practical way to cover the open spaces of Newcastle's outback, humans on Newcastle are allowed to own and fly propeller-driven aircraft up to TL6. Once the MIAs are located, the characters must plan a rescue using a glider and tow plane. Although helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft are available, their noise would alert the compound guards. A glider, on the other hand, can be released from its tow plane kilometers away from the camp and land silently at night within the compound. Because they are made of fabric and wood, a glider would be virtually undetectable to the sensors found on Newcastle. The tow plane can be rented or otherwise procured on Newcastle without much trouble through sources in the underground.

The glider the PCs will use, a *Thunderhead*-class assault transport, will be carried crated in the fat trader and listed on the manifest as a sport aircraft. The fat trader will return to Newcastle eight weeks after the drop-off to pick up the rescue team and the MIAs.

Col. Idlen Gushdemgu, Army (Ret.): A79A9A, age 42, six terms, Cr250,000.

Skills: SMG-3, Leader-3, Tactics-2, Autopistol-2, Brawling-1, Assault Rifle-1, Recon-1, Heavy Weapons-1, Forgery-1, Streetwise-1, Bribery-1, Stealth-1, Small Blade-1.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

When they arrive at the ship, one rescue team member is selected as the machinegunner and one as the grenadier. The machinegunner is issued a light machinegun and three 100-round belts. The grenadier is issued a RAM grenade launcher and a bandolier containing 10 clips of three rounds each. (Note that the glider is equipped with a top hatch in its fuselage and a pintle mount for the LMG.)

To all other characters, the colonel issues a TL8 7mm assault rifle with 10 30-round magazines, three TL7 HE grenades and a chemical smoke grenade. Three 4cm RAM-8 HE rifle grenades are also issued to each of these riflemen. One week's dehydrated field rations (1.4 kg) and a distant-range radio communicator (0.1 kg) is issued to each team member. Pilots are issued one pair of light-intensifying night vision goggles each and one pair of electronic binoculars.

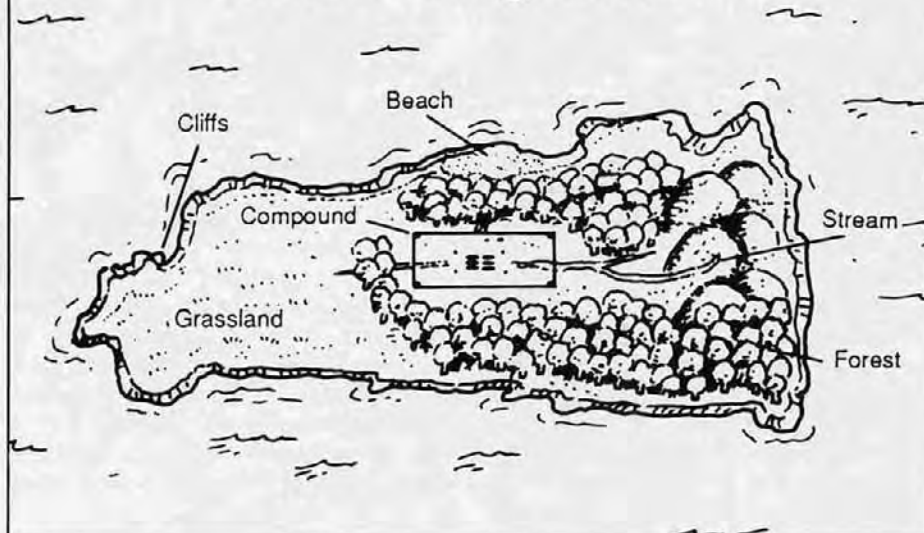
The colonel is armed with a sub-machinegun with 10 30-round magazines, an autopistol with three 15-round magazines, three TL7 HE grenades and three chemical smoke grenades. One smoke grenade produces white smoke for concealment, and the other two produce colored smoke for signaling (one red and one green).

If there are less than five PCs in your group, the referee may generate army or marine Veteran NPCs to bring the rescue

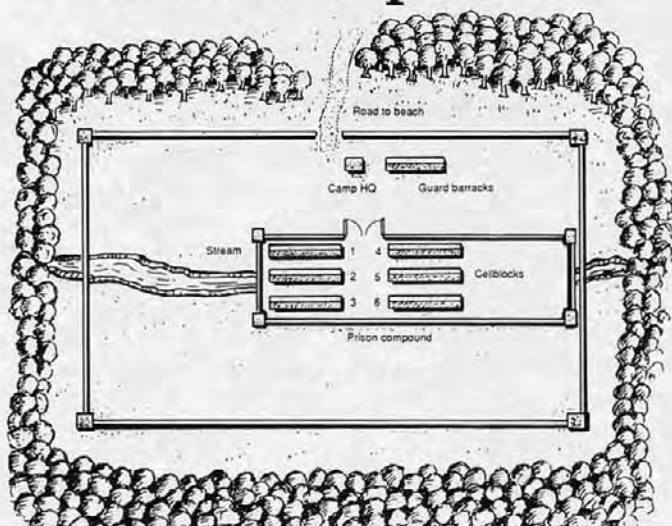
Newcastle Main Continent



Little Fang Island



POW Compound



team up to five persons. If none of the PCs has Mechanical skill, at least one of the NPCs should have Mechanical 1+.

Vargr Space: The voyage to Newcastle will be fairly routine until the ship reaches Vargr space, although the danger of Vargr corsairs is ever-present. In Vargr space, the ship will be stopped repeatedly and searched by local Vargr authorities. It will also be subject to attack by local corsairs. There is a high probability that the ship's cargo, including the glider, will be stolen.

Landing: The characters can't be landed at the Newcastle downport outside of Thurston. They would be immediately arrested, because humans are not allowed to travel between worlds of the Drr'lana Network. They must instead be clandestinely inserted by ship's boat in the outback of the major continent. They will carry their weapons and local ID papers.

The fat trader carries a 20-ton launch, which will be used to land the characters in the rolling foothills of the mountain range about 100 kilometers northeast of Seward, Newcastle's capital city (population 873,000). They can hike overland from the landing site initially through ranchlands, then through farming country before reaching the industrial outskirts of Seward. A number of the farms they pass are deserted. Characters may want to cache their weapons and military equipment before they encounter a Vargr patrol. Roll for an encounter every six hours using the Random Encounters Table (*Referee's Manual*, page 42). Any military or police encounters will be with Vargr units. All other encounters are Vargr on a 1D roll of 1-2.

Glider: After the characters are landed, the fat trader lands at the downport and discharges its cargo, including the glider. The group must get to the starport within five days and claim the glider before the fat trader lifts off on the next leg of its voyage. Unfortunately, Thurston is about 5000 kilometers east of Seward, the city nearest their objective.

If the characters can't claim the glider, they will have to find a glider and buy it, or build their own. A team with Propeller Aircraft and Mechanical skills can design and build one in 1000 man-hours.

LOCAL CONDITIONS

Because trade with the Imperial worlds has been suppressed, the Newcastle economy is depressed. Unemployment is high; idle workers are common on the streets; petty crime is on the increase; and many homes and farms are for sale.

The human inhabitants have been thoroughly cowed by the Vargr during the past two decades and, with few exceptions, are docile and accept their situation. The human underground barely exists. Attempts to con-

tact it prove futile and can lead to arrest by Vargr authorities. The adventurers may easily be betrayed by human collaborators if they tell their true story. The Freedom Through Peace (FTP) party is the only legal human political movement on Newcastle. This party extols pan-sophont brotherhood. Not coincidentally, party members occupy the best remaining homes, have air travel privileges, enjoy special stores for the best available food and clothing, and hold government administrative jobs under Vargr supervision. FTP members are despised as traitors by most Newcastle humans.

Newcastle's Vargr rulers have grown cocky and overconfident. Their formerly strict movement and document controls have grown somewhat lax as the Vargr have grown lazy after their conquest. Because the last major anti-Vargr incident occurred more than 10 years ago, Vargr will generally leave humans alone as long as they behave correctly and grovel. Vargr leaders are more concerned about threats from humans and Vargr outside the Newcastle system than from humans on the planet.

The adventurers must maintain a low profile. They may set up their base in a deserted farm. However, renewed activity may draw the attention of Vargr patrols. Another option may be to rent or buy a small farm on the outskirts of the city where they can assemble their weapons and equipment and prepare their glider. Because of the depressed economy, it should not be too difficult to locate and rent an unused farm near the coast north of Seward. These may be purchased directly or through agents with offices in Seward (the safest approach). The farm must be large enough to hold a small airstrip and have a barn large enough to be used as a hangar. The characters can work at menial jobs during the day, and seek information or build the glider (if needed) at night.

The referee should generate rumors that lead the characters to believe human POWs are used as slaves to load cargo at the Wiggins Ranch on the coast northeast of Seward. Moreover, some rumors should reinforce the idea that the POWs are held in a camp on an island in Great Seward Bay.

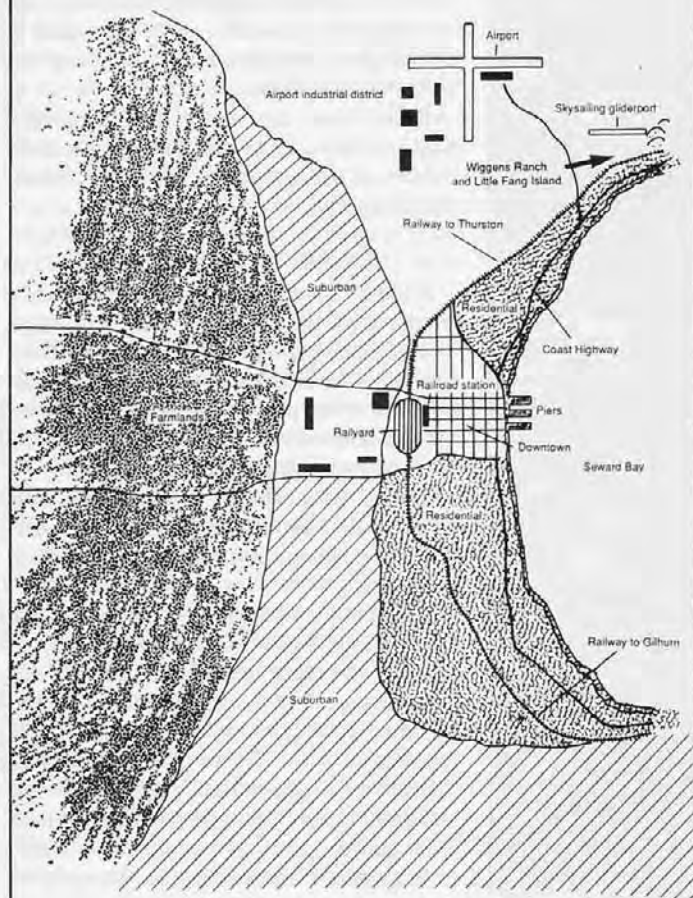
TRANSPORTATION

Before the characters can retrieve the POWs, they must retrieve their glider. It's been dropped off at Thurston starport inside a crate weighing nearly two tons. They must reach Thurston then return to Seward with their glider by one of two methods:

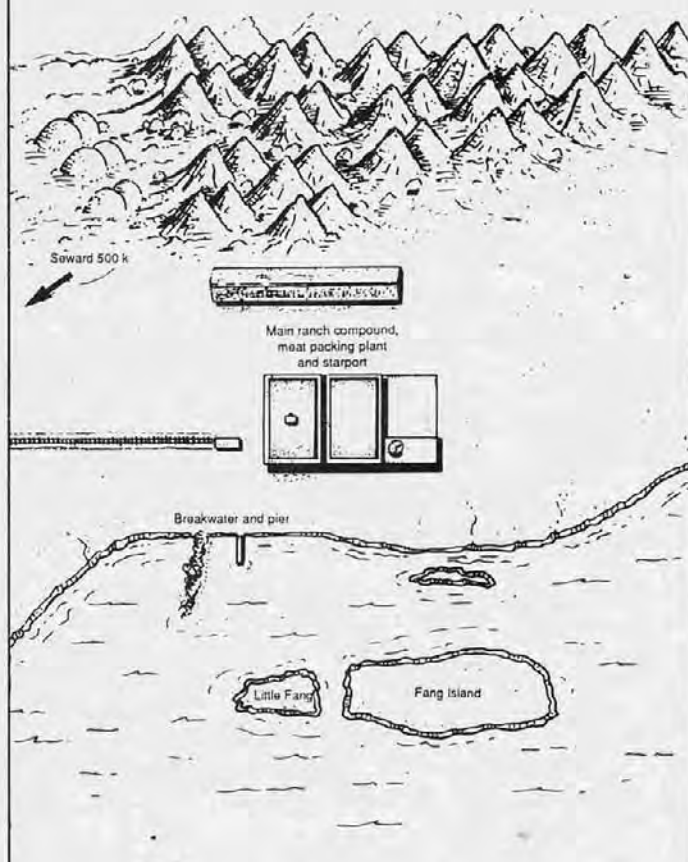
Rail: Newcastle has a transcontinental railroad connecting all the major cities on the main continent. Trains hauled by gas turbine locomotives carry freight to and from Thurston and the other cities, and there is a daily passenger train between Seward and Thurston. Freight trains average 75kph and typically cover the Thurston-Seward run in slightly more than two 39-hour Newcastle days, including refueling stops. The characters will have to charter a freight car for a load the size of the glider. Charter rates are Cr500 per freight car per trip.

Passenger service between the two cities is aboard a 120 kph express train that takes 48 hours including stops. Passage costs Cr150 for a one-way coach ticket, Cr500 for a sleeping car berth. Rail is the way most humans travel on Newcastle. Easily forged movement permits must be obtained from Vargr authorities, but

Seward and Vicinity



Wiggins Ranch



checks of rail passengers are cursory.

Air: There are two flights a day between Newcastle and Thurston aboard *Tokyo*-class heavy passenger transports (COACC, page 81). Round-trip fare is Cr1000. Vargr may travel in first class for Cr3000 round-trip. Security and document checks are extremely long and detailed for boarding human passengers. Only humans who have been actively cooperative with their Vargr occupiers are allowed air travel. These individuals are viewed as collaborators by most Newcastlites.

TRAINING

The pilot characters need to train as glider pilots and keep up their flight proficiency during this stage of the campaign, or they will have an automatic -1 on any glider flight tasks. The Vargr permit both powered and sailplane flights by Newcastle humans, and there is a skysailing club at a small gliderport along the coast northeast of Seward. Sailplanes are available for rent (Cr50 per hour), and towplanes are available for air launches at the club (Cr50 per launch). Many gliders

soar along the cliffs and hills fronting the bay, and compete for distance and duration records.

WIGGENS RANCH

The Wiggins Ranch covers several thousand hectares centered 500 kilometers north-east of Seward. It's owned by Bartolomeo Wiggins, former general secretary and now treasurer of the Freedom Through Peace party. Wiggins was wealthy before the conquest, with a slaughterhouse and meat-packing business that sold fresh beefalo meat as far rimward as Anarsi (Anarsi/Anarsi 2205). After the Vargr landed, he became their chief fresh meat supplier after betraying the entire Newcastle Resistance Council. His ranch headquarters—which includes a slaughterhouse, meat-packing house, cold-storage warehouses, offices and dormitories for workers—is one of the few sites where starships may legally land on Newcastle outside the planet's two starports. Wiggins employs more than 2000 humans, who herd livestock, slaughter and pack beefalo, and load meat aboard starships or

railcars for shipment to market. A railroad spur serves the ranch, and a breakwater and pier enable wet merchant cargo ships to load meat for on-planet markets.

To confirm the information about the POWs' location, the adventurers can take jobs as cargo handlers or meat packers at the Wiggins Ranch loading site. There, they will hear further rumors of the POWs, and if they are lucky, they may actually spot one or two loading the Vargr starships that frequently call at the ranch's class-H spaceport (clear area with a landing beacon). They may also receive further information about the camp from ex-inmates now working as freedmen if they can successfully gain a conversation with the freedmen.

The characters eventually learn that the POWs are part of a group of slave laborers held in a camp on Little Fang Island, located 10 kilometers offshore south of the ranch.

RECON

Once the characters confirm the location of the POW camp on Little Fang Island, they may want to reconnoiter the island. This can be done in one of two ways:

Sailplane: If the pilot characters have been flying sailplanes from the Seward glider port, they can attempt a long-distance recon flight over Little Fang Island in an "attempt to set a local endurance record." Both thermals and mountain wave fronts should enable a skilled glider pilot to make a round-trip reconnaissance flight.

Boat: They can rent a yacht from the Seward Marina and sail to Little Fang Island, then make a landing by rubber raft and scout the island by foot.

POW COMPOUND

If the PCs succeed in reconnoitering the island, they learn that a platoon of Vargr troops guards the prison compound. They are housed in a barracks near the main gate next to the camp headquarters. The prisoners are housed in an inner compound containing six cell blocks. Each building has 20 individual cells. The inner compound also includes an open exercise area at its east end. All buildings are made of wood, with metal roofs.

Both the inner and outer compounds are surrounded by two-meter-high wire fencing topped with razor wire. Guard towers are located at each corner of the inner and outer compounds. A guard tower contains a light machinegun on a 1D6 roll of 1-2. Otherwise, it contains a rifle-armed Vargr. All towers have searchlights. A stream flows under the inner compound in a concrete culvert, supplying water to the cell blocks. No radar or other sensors are in sight.

RAID

The characters should come up with their

Nimbus High-Performance Sailplane

CraftID: High Performance Sailplane, TL8, Cr4500

Hull: 2/5, Disp=0.037, Weight Loaded=0.5 tons, Airframe=High Performance SP, Armor=0

Wing

Dimensions: Span=20 meters, Average Chord=0.75 meters, Aspect Ratio=26.6.

Loco: Glide Ratio 48, Speeds: Minimum=50, Best=100, Maximum=250

Commo: Radio, Regionalx1

Control: Simple

Accom: Crew=1 (pilot), Oxygen mask and tank, parachute.

Popular high-performance sport sailplane. The high glide ratio enables *Nimbus* pilots to set distance and duration records in many soaring competitions.

Cumulus Two-Place Training Sailplane

CraftID: Two-Place Training Sailplane, TL7, Cr4375

Hull: 2/5, Disp=0.037, Weight Loaded=0.5 tons, Airframe=Sailplane, Armor=0

Wing

Dimensions: Span=15.5 meters, Average Chord=1.31 meters, Aspect Ratio=11.8.

Loco: Glide Ratio 20, Speeds: Minimum=50, Best=75, Maximum=150

Commo: None

Control: Simple

Accom: Crew=2 (pilot, student pilot)

Common sailplane trainer used to teach student pilots soaring flight. Available for rent at many soaring clubs.

Thunderhead Assault Glider

CraftID: Combat Assault Glider, TL6, Cr8500

Hull: 14/35, Disp=4, Weight Loaded=3.5 tons, Airframe=Transport Glider, Armor=0

Wing

Dimensions: Span=25 meters, Average Chord=3.16 meters, Aspect Ratio=7.9

Loco: Glide Ratio 10.7, Speeds: Minimum=50, Best=100, Maximum=300

Commo: Telephone Intercom to tow plane

Control: Simple

Off: Pintle LMG mount on dorsal surface, not usable in flight

Accom: Crew=2 (pilot, co-pilot)

Designed to land a squad of troops in combat, the *Thunderhead* may carry up to 13 troops with their weapons or up to three tons of cargo.

own plan of attack. Shortly before the fat trader is due back at Newcastle, the adventurers may decide to recover their cache of weapons and equipment and rent a cargo plane at Seward's airport. One of the pilots can fly the cargo plane to the farm, where a character with Mechanical skill can install a tow hook.

The tow plane and glider should avoid flying over Seward or anywhere near the airport, and should fly at Low altitude until just before they reach the release point to avoid radar detection.

After the release, the pilot may land the glider within the outer compound. The characters and the colonel can attack the barracks and the nearest guard towers immediately after the glider rolls to a stop. The machine-gunner can mount the light machinegun on the glider's pintle mount and lay down covering fire for the attackers.

Once the guards are eliminated, the characters can search the cellblocks for Lady Liri's brother and the five other missing men. Determine the cellblock containing each of these individuals by rolling 1D for each man. The result is the cellblock number. The glider holds up to 15 people. If the characters open all the cells, the prisoners may storm the glider, and no one will be able to leave.

OPPOSITION

If it is night, the guards in the barracks will be sleeping and can be eliminated with automatic weapons, hand grenades and RAM grenade fire if they have not been alerted. On a 1D roll of 1, the glider is detected on its approach and the guards are alerted. In addition to any guards in the towers, one or more unarmed Vargr may be encountered in the inner compound or a cellblock.

Vargr forces are of Recruit quality with low morale and low initiative. The camp commandant is a Vargr captain with high morale and high initiative. The commandant lives in the camp headquarters building. If he joins up with the other Vargr platoon members, he may rally them and lead a counterattack. He can also call for reinforcements with the camp communicator in the headquarters building. A company-sized force will respond aboard transport helicopters (equivalent to *An Khe*-class **COACC** helicopters) in 1Dx5 minutes if he calls for help.

Except for the rifle-armed Vargr on duty in the gun towers, the guard platoon is armed with shotguns, revolvers and nonlethal, non-persistent gas grenades. Tower guards are armed with 7mm rifles or light machineguns. The commandant is armed with a sub-machinegun and an autopistol.

ESCAPE

The glider pilot can deploy a balloon-borne pickup rig while the others raid the

compound. Then, the tow plane can return at a predetermined time to snatch the glider up into the air. The glider and tow plane can then fly to a wilderness area on an island in Great Seward Bay, where the glider can be released and land. The tow plane can then circle back and be abandoned by the pilot, who then parachutes onto the glider landing site. Here the party can wait until the fat trader's launch picks up the rescuers and the rescued for the voyage home. The colonel will signal the launch with a green smoke grenade if the pickup site is safe or throw his red smoke grenade to wave off the launch in case of danger.

GLIDER FLIGHT

Soaring: This is sport gliding with a sailplane. It can also be used as a means of long-distance individual transport by a highly skilled pilot. Once the craft is launched, the pilot looks for pillars of warm rising air known as "thermals," or for ridge lines, mountains or cliffs where waves of upthrust air can be found. The most reliable way to find a thermal is to look for flocks of native aerial life circling higher as they use a thermal to gain altitude. An instrument called a variometer that measures outside vertical airspeed will also tell you a thermal is present.

Glide Ratio: This is the number of meters you can glide for every meter you descend in still air. The *Nimbus* sailplane has a glide ratio of 48. This means it can glide 48 meters for every meter of altitude it loses in still air. If it were released from a tow cable at 1000 meters altitude, it could glide 48 kilometers before landing.

Speeds: Minimum speed is both the landing speed and the glider's stalling speed.

Best speed is the speed at which the glider gets its highest gliding range (see *Glide Ratio*).

Maximum speed is the highest speed a glider can reach in a dive or while being towed. If this speed is exceeded, the glider risks breaking up in the air. Multiply glide ratio by 0.5 while at minimum speed, and by 0.3 while at maximum speed not under tow.

Pickup Rig: The pickup rig includes a plastic, fin-stabilized, ovoid balloon, a 100-meter nylon rope, a glider tow hook and a bottle of helium.

To launch a glider with the pickup rig, the balloon is inflated and sent aloft. A pickup aircraft with a clamp on its nose flies very low parallel to the glider's takeoff run and snatches the tow line held aloft by the balloon. The glider is then hauled somewhat violently airborne under tow from the pickup aircraft. The tow line is secured by the aircraft crew, and a normal glider tow begins.

The pickup rig, including the deflated balloon and the helium bottle, occupies 50 liters volume, weighs five kilograms, and costs Cr500.

TASKS

To launch a glider:

Simple, Propeller Aircraft.

Referee: If the pilot has no glider training, DM-1. If a fumble occurs, the tow rope breaks, and the pilot must land immediately. If the task otherwise fails, the pilot must release the tow rope prematurely and land to avoid a mishap.

To fly a glider under tow:

Simple, Propeller Aircraft.

Referee: Roll once per hour of towed flight. A fumble indicates that the tow has become too difficult to manage for the tow plane pilot, and he cuts the tow line. The glider must land immediately.

To find a thermal:

Routine, Propeller Aircraft, 1 min.

Referee: Success indicates increase in altitude of 1Dx10 meters. Exceptional success indicates increase of 2Dx10 meters.

To find a ridge wave:

Routine, Propeller Aircraft, 30 sec.

Referee: Success indicates increase in altitude of 1Dx10 meters. Exceptional success indicates increase of 2Dx10 meters. Note that this can occur only in areas where hilly or mountainous terrain is present.

To safely land a glider:

Simple, Propeller Aircraft.

Referee: A fumble results in a ground loop that damages the glider.

To set up a glider pickup rig:

Simple, Dex, 30 sec.

Referee: This task is Routine if performed in darkness.

To pickup a glider or individual with a balloon pickup rig:

Routine, Propeller Aircraft.

Referee: A fumble indicates that the balloon is hit and punctured, or the tow line is broken during the pickup attempt. A new pickup rig must be set up for another attempt.

To pilot a glider safely through a pickup rig takeoff:

Routine, Propeller Aircraft (fateful).

Referee: Failure indicates that the tow-line snaps and the glider must land immediately. Ω

For information on generating a motor yacht, see "Wet Navy 1" in **Challenge 53**, "Wet Navy 2" in **Challenge 54** and "Wet Navy 3" in **Challenge 60**.

Worlds between Vhodan and Newcastle, plus the original map of Newcastle, are detailed in the *Flaming Eye Campaign Sourcebook* by Digest Group Publications.



Affinity

Affinity is a World-class luxury liner designed to keep the comfort

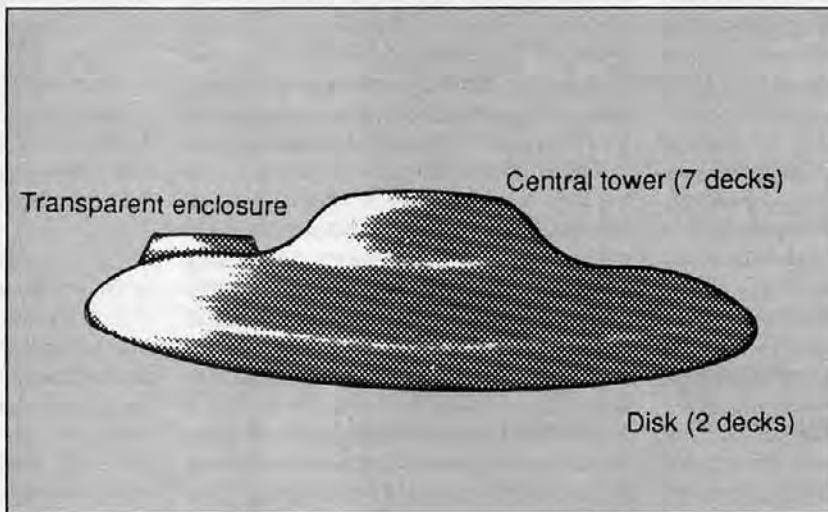
and luxury of its passengers its first priority. PCs may choose the *Affinity* as an enjoyable escape from routine, a place to hear or start rumors, or a way to make contact with NPCs or possible patrons. Informants and spies use the ship as a marketplace for their confidential information and secrets. Political showdowns, high-stakes deals and military secrets abound on the *Affinity*—all covered by the gloss and glamour of a luxury resort. The liner makes a great location for missions involving important passengers—discreet assassinations, blackmail, kidnappings, etc. are all possible. (Crimes committed on the *Affinity* are dealt with quickly and harshly under "captain's discretionary laws.")

Those who wish to get aboard but do not have the financial means may opt to take a position as steward. There is a large turn-over in steward positions, and a few jobs are usually always open. Stewards are paid Cr750 per month, plus tips.

HISTORY

GSbAG MegaCorp, in a limited partnership with Tukera Lines MegaCorp, in 1087 began the design and construction of the interstellar cruise ship. In 1103, the *Affinity* made its first commercial voyage. Over the next two years,

Affinity became a sensation in the Core sector—a place for the idle rich and striving young nobles to meet and socialize. Like a travelling circus, the *Affinity* moved from



AFFINITY

CraftID: World-class luxury Liner, Type Y, TL15, Mcr35,000
Hull: 67333/168,333, Disp=100,000 tons, Config=6USL, Armor=60G, unloaded=630,000 tons, loaded=64,000 tons
Power: 800/1600, Fusion=250,000 Mw, Duration=45/135
Loco: 1350/2700, Maneuver=1G, 2025/4050, Jump=2, Cruise=750kph, Agility=1
Commo: Meson Comm=FarOrb, Radio=system
Sensors: EMActive=FarOrb, Radio=system
 Densitometer=HighPen (1km), Neutrino=10kw,
 ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
 PasObjScan=Rout, PasObjPin=Rout,
 PasEngScan=Rout PasEngPin=Rout
Off: None
Def: BlackGlobe UCP: 4, Nuc. Damp UCP:9 DefDM: +6
Control: Computer=9x3, Panel=Holographic linkedx2631,
 Special=Lg HoloDisplayx16, Envir=basic environment,
 basic life support, extended life support, artificial grav,
 inertial comp.
Accomm: Crew=911 (Bridge=5, Eng+5, Maint=20, Flight=140,
 Troops=250, Command=70, Stewards=400, Medical=20), HighPassage=1000, Middle Passage=200,
 LowPassage=0, Staterooms=2000,
 Subcraft=Pinnancex5, Shuttlex8, Launchx50
Other: Cargo=12,000kl, Fuel=337,500kl, Objsize=Lg,
 EMLevel=Strong

By Charles Ryckman

the *Affinity* has changed. No longer able to sustain itself on ticket sales and on-board events, the Tukera management team had to devise a plan to keep the *Affinity* in operation since its initial high cost of construction had yet to be recovered. Luckily for Tukera, the *Affinity* found its own future. Over the last two years, the *Affinity* has become a mobile and neutral meeting place for important officials from the megacorps, various governments and other powerful individuals.

TRAVEL

The routes followed by the *Affinity* can be set at the referee's discretion. Generally, the ship travels only to high-population worlds with class-A or class-B starports. Standard operation for the *Affinity* is to spend two weeks in-system and one week in jump space. The two-week stay may be altered if special events are planned. Travel aboard the *Affinity* is not cheap.

High Passage: A single high passage (one jump and one week in-system) costs Cr50,000. High passage travellers have full use of all the facilities on the *Affinity*, including any special events that may be scheduled during their stay. Service for high passage is exceptional. A steward staff of 400 provides for the every comfort of high passen-

gers at a ratio of one to three at worst and one to two most often. In general, a steward is only responsible for two passengers.

With the onset of the Rebellion, the role of

Middle Passage: Occasionally, a middle

passage is available for Cr3500, but these are usually held by companies and governments for use by their agents and officers who permanently reside on the *Affinity*. Middle passengers must pay separately for ship-board events, dining and entertainment.

Day Tickets: While in-system, day tickets may be purchased for Cr1500, giving visitors complete use of the ship's facilities and passes for all on-board events. There are 2000 day tickets available, and they only last 24 hours.

Starship Hold: The cost of the starship hold (see below) is Cr200 per ton displacement (Cr40,000 for a yacht-sized craft).

Crew Tickets: If a traveller makes use of the starship hold, additional passages and crew tickets may be purchased for Cr15,000 each to provide for crewmembers. Crew ticket holders must pay separately for ship-board events, dining and entertainment.

FEATURES

The *World-class* liner is a disk-shaped craft. The disk has a radius of approximately 230 meters and is 12 meters thick, and contains the two main decks. The central tower is 40 meters high and has a radius of 20 meters. The tower contains seven tower decks. The tower decks house all the service facilities—kitchens, storage, laundry, medical center, etc. The upper tower decks contain the bridge and other starship operations equipment. Also, many of the crews' staterooms and lounges are located in the tower. A hub deck is located on the bottom of the craft that houses the *Affinity's* auxiliary vessels.

Cabins: Staterooms on the *Affinity* are spacious. Almost all of them have space views. The rooms have wood and metal interiors, and carpeted floors, giving passengers a feeling of luxury. Fresh plants and flowers are placed in every cabin. All high passage cabins also include a whirlpool spa and zero-G sleeping areas. Fifty cabins on the *Affinity* are also fitted with holographic projectors that allow stewards to tailor a cabin's interior to the special tastes of important passengers.

Starship Hold: A large portion of the ship is set aside as a starship hold. This bay of 74,250 kl (5500 tons displacement) is used to transport starships owned by passengers. Often, a noble travelling in his own yacht will dock his craft inside the *Affinity* so that he may spend a few weeks aboard, meeting with other dignitaries, enjoying special events, attending conventions or whatever. Then, after a jump or two aboard the liner, the noble departs in his own ship to return to his homeworld. Passengers who plan to make "delicate" deals aboard the *Affinity* often bring a starship aboard to assure themselves a quick escape. Currently, the starship hold has only simple repair

facilities and refueling equipment. Crews are not allowed to stay on the ship once it is in the hold, so they (or their employer) must purchase high passages or crew tickets. The capacity of the hold is 25,200-ton displacement vessels or their equivalent. The largest ship that can enter the hold is 600-tons displacement.

ENTERTAINMENT

The liner provides entertainment, exercise, dining, dancing and sporting facilities in various locations throughout the ship.

Environment Bays: A large portion of the ship is taken up by two huge bays that are actually simulated environments. Each of the bays is 150 meters long, 100 meters wide and 10 meters high (150,000 kl each).

The first bay is a simulated coastal region (Atmosphere 6, Hydrographics 5). The region is dominated by a sandy beach, bordered by ocean (with artificial waves) on one side and lush vegetation on the other. Along the beach are low-set bungalows for private use. Also, there are three larger bungalows—a restaurant and two bars.

The second environment bay is a forest region (Atmosphere 6, Hydrographics 1.5). The forest setting is very subdued, providing a comforting and peaceful hideaway for passengers tired of the glitz of the *Affinity*. Through the use of robotics, the forest bay is also the setting for occasional passenger hunting exercises. In both bays, ample use of holographic technology gives the illusion of a much larger space containing blue sky, horizon, sunsets, trees, shrubs and small animals (to complement the real ones).

Arena: A 3000-seat arena/stadium provides a place for concerts, shows and other major events for high passengers and in-system visitors. Championship sporting events are also played here if the playing field fits (see below). The stage area is approximately 30 meters by 10 meters. Lately, the arena has been scheduled more and more for "combat" competitions, including jousting and gladiatorial events using a variety of equipment. Although these events are monitored to avoid serious injury, occasional outbreaks of serious violence do occur (and sometimes involve spectators).

Gambling: There are two gambling casinos on the *Affinity*. The first is the Starlight Casino. This large casino is enclosed by a transparent roof that looks out into space. The second casino is much smaller, and is set aside for serious gamblers and those wishing to make more "interesting" wagers.

Several types of betting games are available. Type 1 includes games in which each betting round is dependent on the previous rounds (e.g., blackjack and poker). Type 2 includes games in which each betting round is independent of the previous rounds (e.g., dice games). Tasks are as follows:

To win at Type 1 games:

Routine, Gambling, Int, Fateful (confrontation).

Referee: The dealer or operator gets DMs to make the characters lose. Good dealers do not always use their skill to make the characters lose—instead, they help the characters win to get them hooked into playing.

To win at Type 2 games:

Routine, Gambling, Educ, Fateful.

Referee: Since these games are totally random, the dealer or operator does not affect the outcome (although he may affect the characters' willingness to bet!).

Gravity Ball

One of the most popular activities on the *Affinity* is gravity ball, and four playing courts are available. The game consists of two teams of two players each, participants wearing padded armor (with helmet) and a full-torso grav-belt. Facilities include a playing cubicle 25 meters wide and five meters high, and a 1-kilogram metal playing sphere.

The object of the game is to place the metal playing sphere into the opposing players' gravity well, located at either end of the court. The weak gravity well is only one-half meter wide and pulls the sphere only very weakly. The mass of the playing sphere makes it very unwieldy to throw and catch since the characters are weightless (remember equal but opposite actions).

To make the game more difficult, each player has a personal gravity field which attracts him to his opponents when they come within one meter of one another, but which will not allow him to come within one meter of his teammate. Two players attached by their gravity fields must struggle to separate from each other or continue to play attached.

Each game lasts for 10 minutes, with each team allowed one 30 second time-out. Time-outs can only be called by the team with possession of the sphere. The referee must keep close count of the number of seconds used each turn for the tasks since the game only lasts 10 minutes.

Gravball skill is equivalent to Zero-G Combat minus one. The player with the highest Dexterity score is allowed to move first (unless a successful interrupt occurs), followed by the next highest Dexterity and so on.

Gravity ball tasks are listed below. All tasks are one level more difficult if the player attempting the task is currently attached. All tasks are one level more difficult for unskilled players.

To retrieve a free ball:

Routine, Gravball, Dex, 1 sec (safe).

Referee: A "Free Ball" is a sphere that no player is in possession of. Note there are no mishaps with this task.

To steal a controlled ball:

Difficult, Gravball, Str, 1 sec (fateful, confrontation).

Referee: If the task fails, the player who originally had the ball keeps it. If a mishap occurs, the ball becomes free. On success, the ball becomes free. On exceptional success, possession goes to player making the attempted steal.

To attach to an opponent:

Routine, Gravball, Dex, 1 sec (fateful, confrontation).

Referee: On a mishap, the players lose the ball but still become attached.

To detach oneself from an opponent:

Routine, Gravball, Str, 2 sec, (fateful, confrontation).

Referee: This task is a confrontation only if one player wishes to detach. On a mishap, the ball is lost to both players but they remain attached.

To pass or score the sphere:

Routine, Gravball, Dex 1 sec (fateful).

Referee: On a superficial mishap, the ball becomes free. On a minor mishap, the sphere is intercepted by the other team.

To block a score shot or a pass:

Difficult, Gravball, Dex, 1 sec (safe).

Referee: On exceptional success, the player attempting the block gains possession of the ball.

Every six months, a major grav ball competition is played aboard the *Affinity*. New challengers are always welcome in the tournaments. Unfortunately, the open competitions are not generally as clean as pro games. Legalized betting is supposedly banned for all open games, but is generally quite popular. Also, players in the open games are not shielded from the public, and an occasional player is "persuaded" to throw a game. There are no officials on the court in open competitions, and pretty much anything goes.

Simwar

Simwar is a collection of simulated war-games. Many variants are played, involving either personal one-on-one combat, fleets of starships, battalions of grav-tanks, etc. Contestants are neurally interfaced to a central computer which controls the games. All five senses are stimulated by the neural network. Each player takes on the roles of some person and is able to act out his role as he sees fit. The player retains complete mental awareness that he is in a simulation and does not gain any new mental abilities or skills while playing. On the other hand, the players' characters do have possible additional physical abilities the player may not otherwise have, such as very high Dexterity or Strength, or the ability to use a specific or special weapon or vehicle.

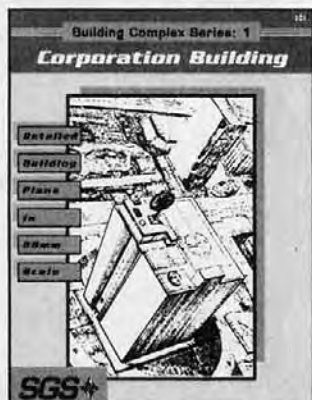
A player's position within the game is chosen on a first-come basis, with positions

available from overall commander to a simple combat soldier on the battlefield. Occasionally, passengers are offered small incentives such as a reward or prize as an enticement to play in simulations which require large numbers of players.

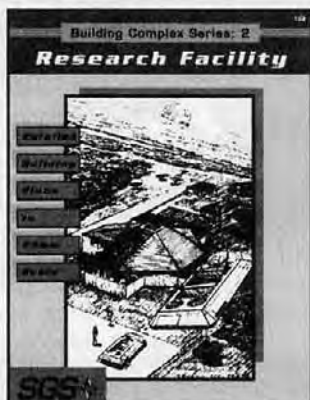
Since the onset of the Rebellion, the simwar computer has taken on a new role. Military officials who lack facilities and equipment sometimes rent time on the computer for personal simulations. Also, private individuals sometimes run simulations of some future event (theft, assassination, etc.). Time may be rented to run simulations for Cr1500 per hour.

The simwar court offers a unique opportunity to **MegaTraveller** players and referees to explore many parts of the universe without seriously affecting the overall campaign. For example, characters could run a simulation in which they send forth huge fleets of Imperial ships to attack Zhodani worlds. Obviously, this would shake up any regular campaign and require the players to be running rather powerful characters. Players can take their characters on fantasy-type adventures, such as arming themselves heavily and taking on powerful enemies without actually endangering themselves. Characters can also simulate time travel, both forward and backward, to see how different actions may have altered later history. Finally, characters could enter "alternate realities" in which things like magic and superhuman powers are possible. Ω

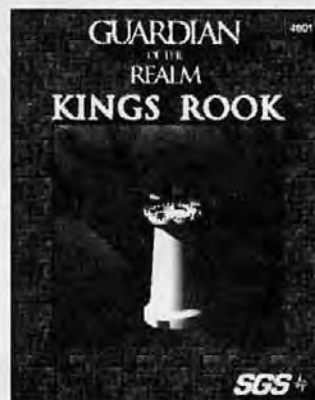
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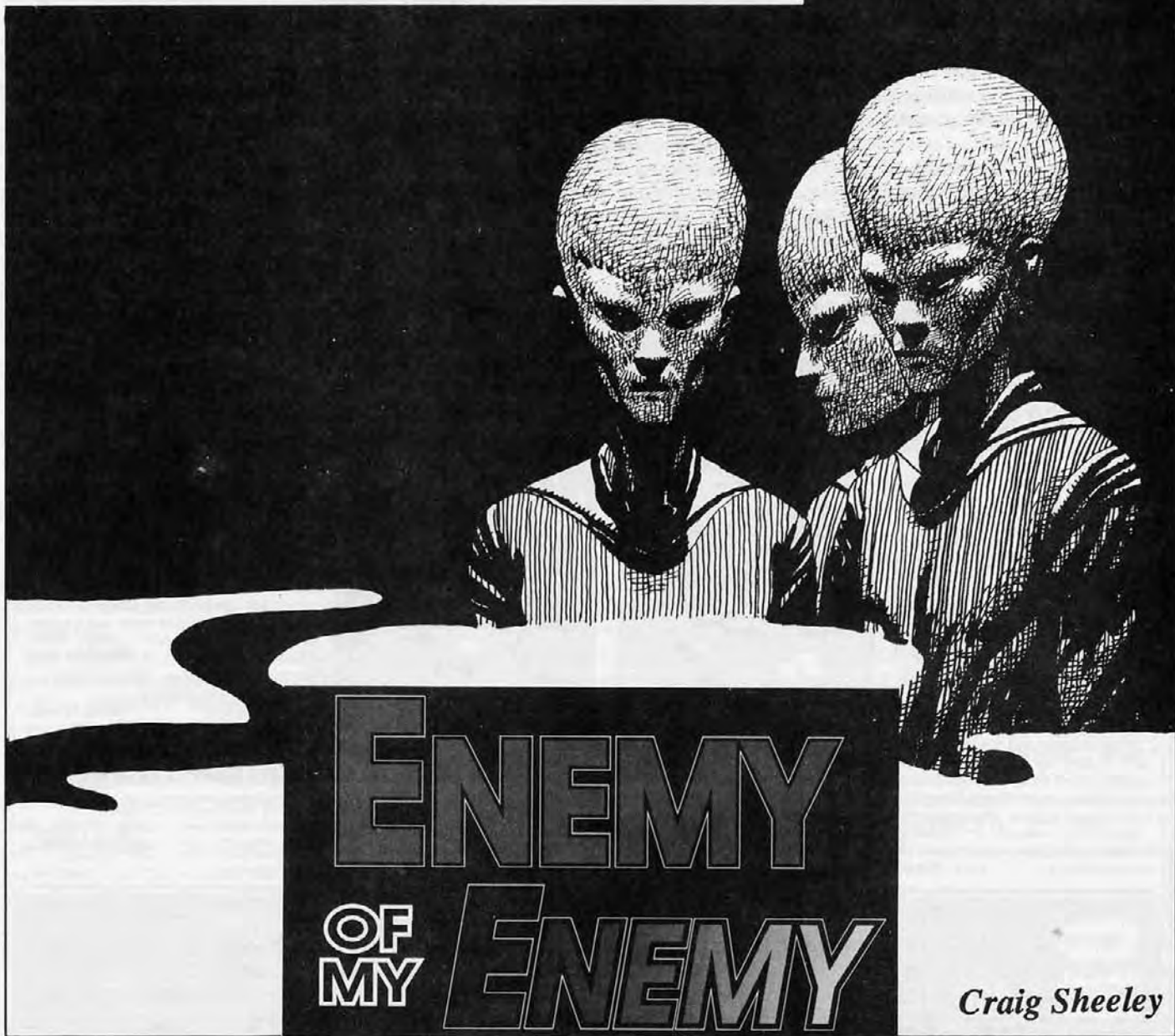
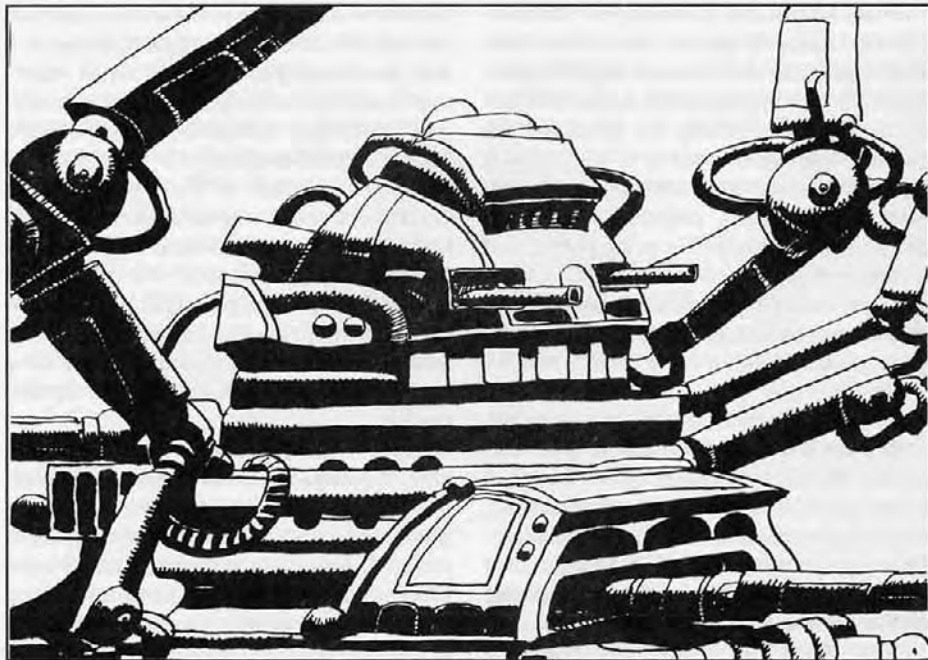
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AD9



Craig Sheeley



local farmer reports a flying saucer passing overhead a few nights ago. As he stood watching, red bolts, like big Roman candles, suddenly shot up from the ground beneath it. The saucer then flew off to the southeast.

If the PCs have government or law enforcement contacts, they may be "leaked" inside information about the sighting. If they work for the government (agents, astronauts, military reservists and fed/state/local law enforcement careers), they may be contacted directly by government authorities. Or they might even be driving by during the night and see the show for themselves.

BATTLEFIELD

The site is about 14 kilometers from the outskirts of the city, in the middle of some wooded rural terrain. The land is full of hills and rocks, and has reverted to its natural wooded tangle. The adventurers will need an off-road vehicle like a Hummer, pickup truck, Range Rover or off-road cycle to get through, and a brush-cutter on the front of the vehicle would be nice. It takes the adventurers an hour and a half to plow through the 2 kilometers of underbrush to reach the site.

The battlefield is just that. It was once a grove of trees. But now the trees have been cleared out in a 60-meter radius—sheared through at ground level and stacked neatly to one side. Whatever cut the trunks didn't leave any marks—the cut ends are completely smooth, almost polished. The clearing is marred by ugly craters, ranging in size from one to several feet across and up a foot deep. The craters appear to have heat-fused earth. They are angled away from the center of the clearing. Unidentifiable shards of scorched metal surround the larger craters.

The place smells. Bad. The odor of cooked meat—rancid cooked meat—fills the still air, as well as the sting of ozone and the stink of hot metal. Empaths can almost taste a lingering taint of fear and shock. Corpses—pieces of corpses, anyway—are scattered around each crater. The body parts come from dead humanoids. Not humans—these creatures are more slender, with pale skin, and three fingers and a thumb on each hand. They were wearing pale blue clothing of some unidentifiable fabric. All the limbs are scorched at the free ends.

The center of the clearing boasts two interesting features: a big crater 10 meters in diameter, located about 15 meters northeast of the center point, and a 10-meter cube of silver metal, studded with crystals, at the exact center. The cube is still and cold. It weighs about 4000 kilograms (it's largely hollow) and seems to have no entrances, seams, controls, decorations or

even patterns among the crystals. The crystals range in size from thumbnail to platter and appear to be integral parts of the metal—there are no seams between metal and crystal. No tool the PCs have will dent the metal or score the crystals. The big crater is not surrounded by body parts or metal shards; there is no lip of fused soil surrounding it like the others. It's like a hole in the ground—a perfectly round hold in the ground. And there's something at the bottom of the hole. It looks like a cross between a robot, a ground car, and a kid's toy tank. There are big arms with six-fingered gripping hands, a few arms tipped with sharp crab-claws, blackened weapons nozzles projecting from a pylon-mounted "head" turret, all arranged on a sloped-metal hull/body sitting atop the melted remnants of a caterpillar track system. The arms are frozen in place, and the whole bizarre (and faintly menacing) thing is motionless.

MACHINE LANGUAGE

Just when the adventurers are convinced that the machine is dead and harmless, it speaks! "Do you intend to destroy me?" It waits for an answer. "Yes," is an incorrect answer. The machine also interprets weapons pointed at it as a hostile act, and hostiles are to be destroyed. If the PCs offend it, the machine aims its weapons at them with blinding speed. If the PCs make no threats, the machine asks, "Are you allies of the Ziv?" If the adventurers ask who or what the Ziv are, the machine projects a hologram of a humanoid ET and identifies it as a Ziv.

If the adventurers answer that they are not allies of the Ziv, the machine says, "I am a Mark III LFDU. The Ziv are my enemy. I have been sent to destroy their base here." It extrudes several gadget-tipped arms. "I can detect their base. It is not far away. I require your assistance to restore myself to operational status. At present, my motive capability has been destroyed. I require replacement parts and raw materials, as well as transport to a place of temporary safety where I can effect the needed repairs. I await your assistance."

The adventurers now have several options:

They can try to destroy the Mark III (which degenerates into a firefight). They really don't stand much chance against this armored killing machine.

They can try to pump it for more information. It answers a few quick questions, then states that information transfer would better be accomplished in an area of safety. (See Input-Output, below.)

They can run away (leaving the referee high and dry on how to get them back into the adventure) and perhaps report the thing to the authorities. (See Government Involvement, below.)

Or they can try to assist it directly. (See C⁴, Ltd., below.)

INPUT-OUTPUT

If the adventurers ask Mark III some pointed questions, here are some of the answers it gives.

Where did you come from? Another world, apparently in a different space-time continuum.

What is your world like? Not like this one. Other details are irrelevant to the mission.

What is your mission? To find and destroy the Ziv base detected during the space-time transfer.

How did you get here? The Ziv have a space-time transfer device that enables them to transfer matter and energy between worlds. (The device is the large metal cube in the middle of the clearing. Activating the cube is possible, but Mark III believes that activation will only restore the door to its own world. It does not know how to set the cube otherwise.)

Who or what are you? I am a Mark III LFDU. (The Mark III does not explain that LFDU stands for lifeform destruction unit.)

Are you going to kill us? No. That is not part of the mission programming. The purpose of the mission is to destroy the Ziv and their base, then return to origin point to reinforce the battle there.

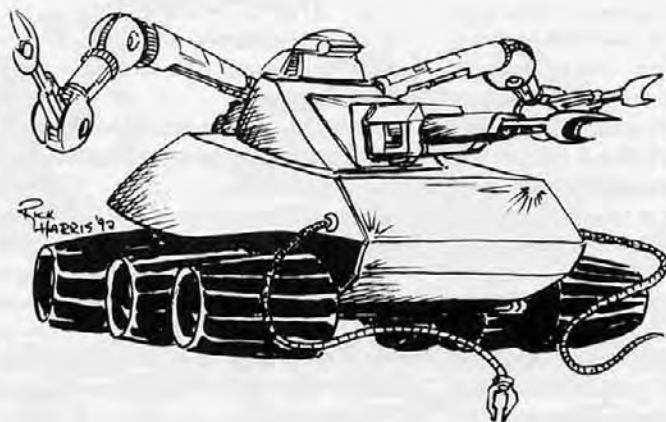
Who or what are you battling on your world? That information is irrelevant to this mission.

Mark III has no intention of revealing anything useful about itself or its world to these living creatures. In return, it desires books (electronic if at all possible) about the social, political and military situations of Earth. If the adventurers are actually trusting enough to provide it with such data, they deserve to have Mark III return someday to their dimension—with some of its bigger cousins.

C⁴, LTD.

If the adventurers want to assist the Mark III on their own, they have to find the materials it needs and find a way to move it. The Mark III can repair its minor injuries itself, if provided with metal and silicon. Restoring its minor systems to full function requires about an hour. Replacing its motive system takes longer. It needs something like a truck chassis and drive train, and specifically requests a caterpillar-tread drive train, something only found on military vehicles and heavy construction vehicles. The cybertank weighs about 2500 kilograms and would take a tank-transporter, a flatbed equipment mover or some other heavy-duty load lifter to transport it. Just moving it requires a winch that can drag about three metric tons. Transporting it takes a JumpAbout VTOL, a heavy helicopter or a ground vehicle on

Mark III (Vehicular Robot)



The Mark III is the size of a car and is treated as a vehicle in combat. When the "crew" servos or sensors ("sights") are destroyed, the Mark III cannot shoot. When the engine is destroyed, it cannot engage in any activity, but it can be repaired. When the brain is destroyed, the Mark III is dead and beyond repair. The Mark III has several energy beams and can use weapons it has picked up. It can use as many weapons simultaneously as it has "crew" servos, at different targets. Because the Mark III is considered a vehicular robot, it cannot be engaged in melee combat; it *can*, however, conduct melee attacks versus living creatures and nonvehicular robots.

Cruise Speed: 120/70
Com Move: 30/25
Fuel Cap: NA
Fuel Cons: NA

Skills: Heavy Weapons 6,
Melee Combat (Unarmed) 8,
Observation 3, Small Arms
(Rifle) 10, Unarmed Combat
Damage 1D6+1
Wt: 1.5 tons
Crew: 0 (Robot Initiative: 5)
Night Vision: Radar, thermal
imaging

Damage Record

"Crew" Servos: ☐ ☐ ☐
Sensors (Sight/Vision): ☐ ☐
Main Energy Gun: ☐ ☐
Secondary Energy Gun 1: ☐
Secondary Energy Gun 2: ☐
Traverse: ☐
Engine: ☐
Brain (Hit on "Ammo" Hits): ☐
Suspension: Minor damage ☐ Immobilized ☐

Weapon Data

Weapon	Round	Rng	Damage	Pen
Main gun	—	200	20	10/5/1/0
Secondary gun	—	30	10	2/1/0

scale with the Orca 2.5-ton truck or larger.

Where are the adventurers going to find all this heavy stuff? The most logical place to turn would be to a construction company, where heavy equipment would be concentrated and more easily available than stealing it from the military (always a chancy operation).

However, the player characters know of another place where heavy equipment is in use in the city where the campaign is based. The Cafer Concrete Construction Company, Ltd. (C⁴), one of the largest construction conglomerates in the US, is busy with one of its massive "urban renewal" jobs, destroying immense amounts of inner-city slum and replacing the buildings with cheap, low-rent high-rises intended for Mikes and the more economically stable poor. "Homes for the homeless" is C⁴'s motto. No matter whose home is bulldozed in the process. Once hired by a city, C⁴ regards "imminent domain" as an ongoing process; only Dreamland is safe from its rapacious advance.

In reality, C⁴ is one of the more clever insectoid ET plots. It is entirely under insectoid ET control, and its purpose is to build breeding pens for human cattle. The low-rent high-rises are connected to insectoid ET nests, and the ETs are sure that no one will miss the nobodies who take up residence. But that's material for other adventures.

At present, C⁴ presents the most logical

target for the adventurers' need for heavy equipment. C⁴ uses platoons of earth-movers, bulldozers, wrecking balls, trucks, etc. These vehicles are kept in a central vehicle park at the center of the devastation that used to be poor but thriving neighborhoods, protected from vandals and thieves by a four-meter-high, electrified mesh fence tipped with barbed wire (5D6 damage to entire body from touching it; armor does not defend), patrolled by armored guards and monitored by motion sensors and low-light cameras.

These sensors are monitored by computer; the machine alerts guards to the presence of unauthorized movements larger than a dog.

In game terms, the computer-operated detection net has an effective Observation skill of 14.

The guards are Veteran NPCs; they wear RamTech close assault armor and carry M16A2 rifles with underslung M203 grenade launchers (beanbag and teargas loads only). They patrol in armored electric golf carts (treat as Zil Tovarisch for damage and armor) to improve their mobility. These guards consider themselves lucky to have a job that is as steady and pays as well as this one, and they are fairly loyal. They know that the cost of vandalism and theft comes out of their paychecks; they also know that the company has no problems with them using their M16s quite freely.

If the guards run into something they can't handle, they call for reinforcements. There are about 40 guards on duty each night. If a platoon of assault troops can't handle a problem, they have a last (and most expensive) resort—activating the RamTech Roboguard IV kept near the guard house. Anything the Roboguard can't handle will attract attack helicopters with Hellfire missiles.

If the adventurers can sneak past the vehicle park's defenses, it's no real problem finding a transporter rig with a small bulldozer already loaded onto it (this fits both their requirements: something to transport Mark III and a replacement tracked motive system).

Hot-wiring the tractor is an Easy: Electronics job. Driving it requires Vehicle Use (Heavy Vehicle) skill, although it can be crudely piloted without the skill. From there it's just a matter of outdistancing the guards, who are frantic at the thought of about \$250,000 rolling out of the vehicle park and their pockets.

Once provided with the motive system, the Mark III can repair itself and be restored to full function in 12 hours.

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

If the adventurers wish to report the Mark III to the authorities, they can go through government or military contacts, or the police. Going through contacts is a much safer

process, as it means telling people you already know and more-or-less trust (and vice versa). Going to the police gets the adventurers a swift visit (within 12 hours) from grim-faced men wearing mirror-shades and three-piece black suits, who take the adventurers "downtown" and interrogate them for hours about their encounter.

If the PCs alert the authorities, official action is very swift. Military helicopters are scrambled within minutes of the PCs' contact, and land at the site within a half-hour of the alert.

The choppers are loaded with heavily armed troops in black chemical gear; the adventurers are herded over to a chopper and interrogated.

The adventurers are immediately informed that they are "off the case." If the PCs alerted the government through their contacts, it is an Average: Persuasion task to convince the Blue-Boys to let them assist. ("Blue-Boys" is slang for agents of Operation Blue Book, which has been reopened as the primary government agency for dealing with alien phenomena and threats.) Otherwise, such persuasion attempts are Difficult tasks.

The government agents plan to co-operate with the Mark III. They fully agree to provide it with replacement parts (the drive train from an LAV-75) and assist it in attacking the humanoid ET base. However, they have no intention of letting this piece of technological treasure trundle off to its home dimension. I

nstead, they want to dismantle it to learn its secrets, and they plan to keep the Dimension Walk cube, as well!

Official involvement simplifies the job of transporting the Mark III and supplying it with replacement drives since the government is picking up the tab.

The assault on the ET base is easier with official involvement, too, since the government is sending in a platoon of elite Special Forces commandos, a formation of attack helicopters and a platoon of hover tanks (duly impressing the warmachine with the destructive capability of the indigenous lifeforms of Earth). (See Completing the Mission, below.)

Official involvement will change the Mark III's attempt to escape (see Return Home, below).

COMPLETING THE MISSION

Once repaired, the Mark III insists on going to destroy the ET base. It knows the location and can detect something of the defenses.

"They have no force-fields in operation," it tells them. "They should be easy to destroy, even with primitive weapons. I intend to destroy them now; if you wish to assist, I will

wait two hours for you to prepare yourselves for battle."

The ET base is located 21 kilometers from the city, nestled in a valley between wooded hills. It's a simple layout, resembling a prison camp.

There's a 300-meter square of five-meter-high fence, the corner fenceposts tipped with remote weapons mounts of some sort; a smooth, almost liquid-surfaced metallic dome about 40 meters in diameter and 10 meters tall; rows of prefab plastic huts—they look like, and are, cheap backyard sheds; and a 50-meter clear area separating the dome from the huts, with all buildings at least 10 meters from the fence. There appears to be no entry/exit point in the fence, marking aerial transport as the main way in or out.

Men wander aimlessly about the far end of the enclosure. Or they used to be men. Now they're monsters, changed by grafting and viral mutation to animalistic creatures, Moreau weres, their minds destroyed by experimentation and pain.

If the PCs and Mark III have government military assistance, modify the humanoid ET base as follows: The center posts of the fence have guns, too, and the fencepost guns are all death-ray cannon, not handheld models!

A flying saucer is present at the base, with an Armor Factor 10. It powers up on Phase 3 of the first combat turn. Once powered, it has Armor Factor 60 force-fields and a combat move of 150 near the ground—in uncluttered airspace, it has a Combat Move of 1500! After all, Mach 10 maneuvers are no problem to UFOs. It carries a death-ray cannon. In addition to the floater troops, the ETs deploy six warbots (**DarkTek Sourcebook**, page 84) on the first phase following the opening shot.

ATTACK

The Mark III has no stomach for subtlety. It charges down from the nearest hill crest (the crests are about 500 meters from the fences), weaving through the trees, firing at the weapons on the corner posts before they can respond.

Then the ETs counterattack. An iris opens in the top of the dome, and two-man floater pods pour out, carrying humanoid ETs armed with hand-portable death rays, like the ones mounted on the corner posts.

Floater pods are detailed in **DarkTek Sourcebook**. For purposes of play, treat them as unarmored flying vehicles. All "wing" hits are treated as "no effect," indicating a lack of penetration. Floater pods have one crewmember who is busy flying the pod, one passenger who can shoot, one Engine damage box—fragile, aren't they?—and a Combat Move of 10.

These manned pods come out in pairs,

two pods every other phase, and attack the Mark III. If the PCs start picking the pods off, then one-third of the pods concentrate on the adventurers.

As if the ETs weren't enough trouble, the experimental subjects riot once the fence is breached. Most of them just want to get away and won't attack the PCs unless they're in the way. A few of them want to feed, and human flesh sounds good! Treat them as Experienced NPCs with doubled hand-to-hand damage.

The Mark III intends to destroy the dome. It has an Armor Factor of 10 and can sustain 200 damage points. Once the dome is destroyed, the ETs flee, flying off on their floater pods. The Mark III picks off as many as it can.

RETURN HOME

After the attack draws to an end, the Mark III wants to return home via the metal cube dimension doorway. It heads back to the doorway cube at full speed or demands to be taken there if it's been immobilized again. If this request is refused, it threatens to detonate its power core in a 100-megaton explosion. And it will, too, if it can't return to its dimension—a 100-meg blast would put paid to plenty of lifeforms, it figures. A good trade-off.

If the PCs notified the authorities, the Mark III contacts the PCs and informs them that its nuclear-fusion power core will eventually self-destruct if they don't assist it to return to its own dimension. (This is not the exact truth—the power-core could explode, but it would be a deliberate act.) The adventurers will have to sneak into a well-defended military base and get Mark III to the Dimension Walk cube, which is stored at the same base.

MARK III STERILOID

Steriloids are detailed in GDW's **Dark Races** (pages 61-65). These machines were made for one purpose, and that one purpose has now become to destroy all life. They do it very well. So well, in fact, that they are loathe to leave an area until they've seared it to slag.

Fortunately for the adventurers, this particular steriloid has a one-track mind on its assignment to kill the humanoid ETs and destroy their base. It will return to its dimension after accomplishing this, without lingering to vaporize the PCs! It has work to do on its own planet, since it was called from the middle of a big battle to destroy the humanoid ETs. Still, the steriloids now know of another way to Earth, a place overrun with life. And their primary function is the eradication of life.

They'll be back. Ω

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I was reading the Martian Gazette in the lounge of the Explorers' Club at Syrtis Major when Blackstone found me.

"Crispin, you ink-stained wretch! Just the man I was looking for!"

"Eh? Come to repay that fiver I lent you?"

He laughed at that. "No, the dear old government's sending me off into the desert. Seems the Hill Martians up near Gorovaan have been misbehaving—raiding caravans and such. Evidently their medicine man's been telling them some mumbo-jumbo about being invulnerable to our bullets. I'm being sent to quiet them down. Care to come along and represent the press?"

"I think I might. How many men are you taking?"

"Just one."

"One man?! What is he—a miracle-worker?"

"You might say that, yes."

The Plakteshaan, one of the nomadic tribes of the Isidis desert, recently started attacking caravans and outlying settlements in the northern part of the British colony on Mars. From captives it has been learned that the tribe's shaman claims his magic will bring victory for the Hill Martians and prevent the British from retaliating.

Because of the Oenotrian War, the British government lacks the necessary troops to mount a full-scale punitive expedition. Instead, the governor-general has devised an ingenious plan. He is sending a noted stage magician, The Great Wheldrake, to show the Plakteshaan that British magic is superior to their shaman's tricks.

Naturally, Wheldrake needs guides, guards and assistants, so the governor-general is asking the PCs to accompany the expedition. In addition to Wheldrake and the PCs, the government is sending half-dozen

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

By James L. Cambias

cavalrymen as protection. Any reasonable supplies required by the characters can be provided. A package of gifts for the tribal leaders, worth £100, is being sent by the government. The entire party will be mounted on gashants, with remounts and pack animals. Characters who insist on being paid will receive £500 if the mission succeeds.

The expedition will be under the command of whichever PC has the highest military rank.

If no PCs are officers, then Blackstone will be in charge. The six cavalrymen are Martians equipped with modern weapons, mounted on gashants; they are under Blackstone's command.

JOURNEY NORTH

The expedition can travel by canal boat from Syrtis Major to Gorovaan, then set out overland to the east. There will be no trouble within British territory, and the party can stock up on last-minute supplies in Gorovaan.

The hill country east of Gorovaan is not entirely safe. The referee should roll normally for encounters. Nomad encounters are with members of friendly tribes, who respect British power and will not molest the characters. Bandit encounters indicate contact with the Plakteshaan tribe. If the expedition reaches the desert, all nomad encounters will be with the Plakteshaan.

During the journey, the PCs have ample opportunity to get acquainted with The Great Wheldrake and the other members of the expedition. If any PCs are women, Wheldrake will invite the ladies to act as his assistants during the performance for the Hill Martians. Otherwise, he will recruit the character with the highest combined Agility and Intellect.

PLAKTESHAAN

The Plakteshaan are a tribe of Hill Martians who inhabit the Isidis desert east of Gorovaan. The tribesmen live by herding half-wild gashants, hunting, trapping and occasionally raiding settled communities. They are not British subjects, but until recently they did not attack the colony for fear of reprisals. The tribe speaks the Nepenthi dialect, and many members understand Koline and Parhooni.

Making Contact: First contact with the Plakteshaan will be with a band of 10 to 15 warriors (depending on the size of the expedition). They are armed with muskets and sabers, and are mounted on gashants. The leader of the band is Kakeer, the son of the tribe's chieftain. He and his warriors will try to intimidate the party, threatening the group and demanding exorbitant tribute. The PCs will have to negotiate carefully with Kakeer in order to get safe passage to the tribe's encampment; this is a formidable task of Bargaining or Eloquence. The PCs should remember that they are on a diplomatic

mission—if a fight breaks out, they have probably failed.

Tribal Camp: The Plakteshaan camp is a group of large leather tents and wagons, surrounded by herds of gashants. In all, there are 230 people in the camp: 90 men, 100 women, and 40 children. All the men are warriors—when a tribesman can no longer fight, he wanders off into the desert to die. At any given time, there are 10 to 20 men out watching the herds.

The tents are arranged in a circle, and in the center is the chief's pavilion. A crowd of onlookers will gather as the expedition is escorted through the camp to the chief. Some of the warriors will brandish their weapons and shout insults at the foreigners.

Meeting the Chief: Shreegdad, the leader of the tribe, will meet the party in his tent. If there has been no trouble, he will be reasonably polite. If the PCs have any gifts to give him, Shreegdad will be more friendly and will place the characters under his protection while in the camp. He will place a tent at the disposal of the party and invite the visitors to a feast that evening.

FEAST

The feast is held outdoors, in the center of the camp. Some young gashants are slaughtered and roasted, and the tribe members hack off pieces with their knives to gnaw on. The meat is accompanied by a strong home-brewed wine and a few desert plants. The young warriors of the tribe gather around the gashants as they are killed, to drink the fresh blood. Any PC who decides to join them will gain respect in the eyes of the Plakteshaan.

Shaman's Curse:

The tribal shaman, Magadozriid, will be at the feast. He is easily recognizable by his ragged wool robe festooned with fetishes and charms. During the feast, he will suddenly stand before Wheldrake and point a carved bone at the magician, saying, "You have dared to challenge me with your puny magics, Red Man, and you will fail. Dine well, for you will not live to dine again." A hush falls over the company as the shaman stalks away.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

The feast will last long into the night. As the PCs and Wheldrake prepare to bed down for the night, the magician will suddenly complain that he is feeling sick. The sickness gets worse until he suddenly passes out. A Routine: Medicine or Biology skill roll will indicate that Wheldrake has been poisoned! A Difficult: Medicine, Biology or Chemistry skill roll is needed to save his life.

Even if the PCs are able to save Wheldrake's life, the poison will still weaken him. He can barely sit up—performing magic is out of the question. Wheldrake will not recover from the poison for at least a week.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

The party must find a way to go through with the magic show; to admit defeat would immeasurably strengthen the shaman's prestige. One of the PCs must take over as magician. If Wheldrake is still alive, he can tell the characters how to use some of his illusions; otherwise, they must improvise a magic show using their own skills.

Wheldrake's Illusions: Wheldrake has two pieces of stage apparatus for magic illusions. One is a coffin, to be used in the illusion of sawing a person in half. The other is a cabinet used to make people disappear. Both devices require a Difficult: Agility roll on the part of the magician's assistant, as both tricks involve the subject contorting himself to fit into a small space.

Improvised Magic: PCs may be able to

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improvise a magic show using their skills. The referee should encourage the players to come up with their own ideas for tricks. Some suggestions follow: Pickpocket skill allows the character to palm small items and make them appear or disappear. Lockpicking can be used in an escape routine. Observation can be employed to do "psychic" readings of individuals, by deducing things from their appearance. Machinist skill will let the characters figure out how to use Wheldrake's stage equipment if he is incapacitated. Characters with Explosives or Chemistry can create smoke and flash powders; chemists can also do tricks based on color changes and chemical reactions.

The effectiveness of the act depends as much on a magician's stage presence as on the tricks. The performer's Eloquence will influence the audience's reception of the show. Theatrics skill allows the magician to misdirect the audience's attention during tricks and helps him increase the effectiveness of all the illusions.

Medical skill can enable the magician to perform "miraculous cures" of ailments using modern medical techniques. Similarly, any small invention can be used to produce startling effects. One thing which will not impress the Hill Martians is any demonstration involving liftwood or other flying machines; flying is old hat to Martians.

SHAMAN'S ILLUSIONS

Magadozriid can put on a fairly impressive magic show himself. The referee should encourage the players to figure out how the shaman's tricks are performed and try to duplicate them to show there is nothing he can do that the British cannot.

Possession by Spirits: Magadozriid becomes possessed by the ghosts of tribal ancestors. He shakes, froths at the mouth and speaks in strange voices, requiring a Formidable: Theatrics roll and a good knowledge of tribal history. This is one case where the PCs probably cannot beat Magadozriid. It would require an Impossible skill roll in both Archaeology and speaking Nepenthi for a PC to be convincingly "possessed."

Magical Healing: The shaman does much magical medicine, mainly consisting of meaningless passes and dances. However, he does do a very impressive magical surgery routine in which he seemingly plunges his hand into the patient's body and removes chunks of bloody tissue, without breaking the skin. Actually, he is using sleight of hand (Pickpocket skill) to conceal raw gashant meat in his hand. A PC could do the same.

Other Tricks: Magadozriid has a number of other minor tricks, including making a small creature disappear, producing items from the air by sleight of hand and picking pockets. He is very shrewd and adaptable, and will plan his tricks for maximum effect.

AFTER THE SHOW

The referee should let the players make up their own magic show and perform it, evaluating its effectiveness as follows: For each successful trick, give the PCs 1 point. For each failed trick, subtract 2 points. For a successful Eloquence or Theatrics roll for the entire performance, give 1 additional point. For each trick of Magadozriid's that the characters can duplicate, give 2 points. For each trick they cannot duplicate, subtract 1 point. And for each illusion of theirs that Magadozriid can copy, subtract 2 points. The resulting number is the die roll needed for success. If the PCs make the roll, the Plakteshaan will be sufficiently impressed by British magic to stop their raids. If the PCs fail, they must make a second roll to avoid being attacked by the tribe.

THE GREAT WHELDRAKE (GREEN NPC)

The Great Wheldrake (his real name is Alf Biggle) is a fairly good stage magician. He maintains that his skill is unequalled on three planets and six continents. Wheldrake is always interested in making money, but he can be swayed by appeals to his considerable vanity.

Att.	Skills
Str: 2	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1, Close Combat 1 (bashing)
Agl: 6	Stealth 5, Crime 5 (lockpicking), Mechanics 1 (machinist)
End: 1	
Int: 4	Observation 3
Chr: 5	Eloquence 6, Theatrics 4, Linguistics 3 (French, Parhooni, Koline)
Soc: 3	Riding 2 (horse), Leadership 1

Motives: Boastful, Mercantile.

Appearance: The Great Wheldrake is a tall, distinguished-looking man with dark hair and flashing eyes. He dresses well and is always well-groomed. Nevertheless, there is always a fraudulent look about him.

CAPT. BLACKSTONE (EXPERIENCED NPC)

Captain Reginald Blackstone is a young man of good family, who has become a competent and well-respected officer in his years on Mars. He leads a troop of Martian cavalry and has become quite devoted to his men—and they to him. Though perhaps not as intelligent as some officers, Blackstone is brave and devoted to his work.

Att.	Skills
Str: 5	Fisticuffs 4, Throwing 2, Close Combat 3 (edged)
Agl: 3	Stealth 2, Marksmanship 3 (pistol)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 3 (mapping), Fieldcraft 1
Int: 3	Observation 3

Chr: 3 Eloquence 2, Linguistics 2 (Parhooni, Koline)
Soc: 4 Riding 4 (horse), Leadership 2

Motives: Responsible, Loyal.

Appearance: Blackstone is a large, muscular man with elaborate whiskers. His uniform and equipment are in perfect order.

MAGADOZRIID (GREEN NPC)

Magadozriid is the shaman and healer for the Plakteshaan tribe. His magical powers are tricks, used to influence the tribe and enrich himself. An intelligent man, he realized that the Plakteshaan could raid the rich British colony during the war without opposition. He will do everything in his power to defeat the PCs. He speaks only Nepenthi.

Att.	Skills
Str: 1	Close Combat 1 (edged)
Agl: 5	Stealth 4, Crime 5 (pickpocket), Marksmanship 1 (bow)
End: 2	Wilderness Travel 2 (foraging)
Int: 6	Observation 6, Science 1 (biology)
Chr: 4	Eloquence 3, Theatrics 3
Soc: 3	Riding 2 (gashant), Medicine 3

Motives: Ruthless, Arrogant.

Appearance: Magadozriid is an old, bent Martian with stringy gray hair and a tangled beard. He dresses in a bizarre assortment of ragged robes, animal skins and scraps of cloth, all festooned with charms and magical symbols. But his gaze is sharp and alert, missing nothing.

SHREEGDAD (VETERAN NPC)

Shreegdad is the chief of the Plakteshaan. He is a mighty warrior and a good leader in battle, but is only an average administrator. He is no match for Magadozriid's cleverness and fears the shaman's occult powers. Like all Hill Martians, he has a strong belief in fairness and honesty, and he will react furiously if he learns he has been tricked or lied to. His native language is Nepenthi.

Att.	Skills
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 4 (polearm)
Agl: 2	Stealth 1, Marksmanship 1 (bow)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 3	Eloquence 3, Linguistics 1 (Koline)
Soc: 6	Riding 6 (gashant), Leadership 4

Motives: Proud, Aggressive.

Appearance: Shreegdad is very dignified and impressive-looking. He is quite strong for a Martian and is his tribe's greatest warrior. The chief wears the skin of a steppe tiger as a badge of office. Ω

After the live firing exercise, something went wrong. Ship and aircraft blips flashed red, then faded. Within minutes, all the blips were gone, my kid brother among them. Satellite photographs showed the sea strewn with burning wreckage and alive with native predators. The first rescue vessel in the area perished quickly, as did the second. There wasn't a third.

INTO THE DEPTHS

Michael C. LaBossiere





he following adventure is set on a human colony world with a substantial amount of water (Aurora would do nicely).

A naval cadet training unit consisting of six surface vessels and 20 aircraft has been destroyed by unknown forces. The wreckage has not been examined and no survivors have been recovered because any vessel entering the area is destroyed. Satellite photographs indicate that the vessels and aircraft were fired on from the water. When one vessel rolled over, gaping holes, similar to those produced by high-energy lasers, were visible before the ship sunk. It is believed that a submarine may be able to enter the area to investigate and recover any survivors. The rescue force will consist of two attack submarines.

REFEREE HISTORY

The exercise re-activated a submerged alien base transported to the world several thousand years ago as part of a military/scientific expedition by a now-extinct race. The base was abandoned and set on "sleep" mode. One of the conditions under which it will "awaken" is when it detects military activity. The fire exercise awakened the base, which immediately dealt with the "enemy." The rescue vessels were also seen as invaders and destroyed. The base computer is convinced that the enemies of its creators have returned, and it will defend the base and the area around it against all intrusions. It is up to the PCs to shut down the base before more people are killed.

PCs with appropriate occupations (military, troubleshooter, medical, etc.) can be assigned to or hired on to the rescue team. Plausible reasons should be found for getting other PCs involved.

FIRST MISSION

The first mission is a complete and horrifying disaster. The military leaders in charge of the mission are convinced that the stealthed Shark submarines are capable of entering the area without being detected. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

When the submarines first enter the region, they detect a large area of electromagnetic distortion that interferes with many of the sensor and scanner systems. It is determined that the distortion is a pod of Venries (see below), and the subs plot a course to bypass them. Once the subs bypass the interference, sensors detect that some sort of scanning beam is being locked onto them. Seconds later, the submarines are rocked by substantial impacts. Warning lights flash, and sirens sound. The damage is quite severe, and both subs begin to take on water. If the PCs are on only one sub, the other is hit again, cracks open and plummets to the bottom. The sub the PCs are on is also hit again. It loses all fire control capacity; the engines go off-line; scanner and sensor systems are disabled; and several compartments are flooded. The submarine manages to reach a safe depth where the crew can abandon ship, provided the order to attempt to reach the surface is given immediately. If the order is given too late, the sub is hit again and plummets to the bottom. How the PCs escape from the crippled sub is then up to them and the referee.

If the PCs reach the surface, their ordeal is not over. The sea is home to predator forms which will attack humans. As the PCs devise a survival plan, be sure to convey to the horror of the situation:

It's a nightmare come to life. You feel things moving by you in the dark water, and odd, glowing shapes are visible. Suddenly, one of the survivors beside you lets out a horrible scream as she is lifted out of the water by some plated monstrosity with bulbous eyes and row upon row of teeth. Her screams are cut short as water floods her mouth when she is pulled under. Horribly, the cold water grows suddenly warm around you. More screams break the night.

After the survivors have been on the surface for 10 minutes, a rescue plane arrives on the scene, only to be shot down in a spray of wreckage. The flaming bits of aircraft look spectacular falling from the night sky and attract some of the larger predators up from the depths. The survivors can see the lights of a rescue ship nearby. When the survivors drift close enough, the vessel fires lines to them. Some NPCs get to the lines first and are pulled toward the boat, like fish on a line. Unfortunately, the movement attracts even more predators, and the hapless victims are quickly devoured. After another hellish hour or two, the PCs drift out of the danger zone and are picked up by the rescue ship and brought to shore. In addition to the PCs, 2D6 NPCs survive the ordeal.

After the PCs have received medical attention, they are brought to a debriefing session and questioned about the mission. The questioners want to know how the submarines managed to enter so far into the danger zone. If PCs were on the bridge of one of the submarines, they might remember that they were not attacked until after they maneuvered away from a pod of Venries. If the PCs fail to make the connection, one of the scientists realizes that the Venries electromagnetic fields prevented the submarines from being detected. This realization will spur an investigation into the Venries.

VENRIES

Discovered by Dr. Janet Venries, a noted French marine xenobiologist, Venries are large, aquatic animals that fill a role comparable to that of the terran whale. Both feed on very small sea organisms by filtering massive amounts of sea water. But Venries are nonmammalian and have gills. Venries rely on the electromagnetic fields they generate to detect their food, each other and various objects (the sea floor, ships, etc.). Venries also seem to be far less intelligent than their terran counterparts. Adult Venries range in size from that of a humpback to that of a blue whale. They look like whales, but have three bladed flukes and armor-like plating on their bodies, with clusters of three eyes on each side of their heads. Coloration ranges from pale gray to black. The ventral regions are lighter in color than the dorsal regions.

Because their electromagnetic fields interfere with surface vessel controls, ocean power station systems and other electronics, a program was developed to keep them from disrupting shipping, underwater communication systems and power stations. The result was an electromagnetic field generating device which could effectively lure or drive away Venries with a 95% success rate.

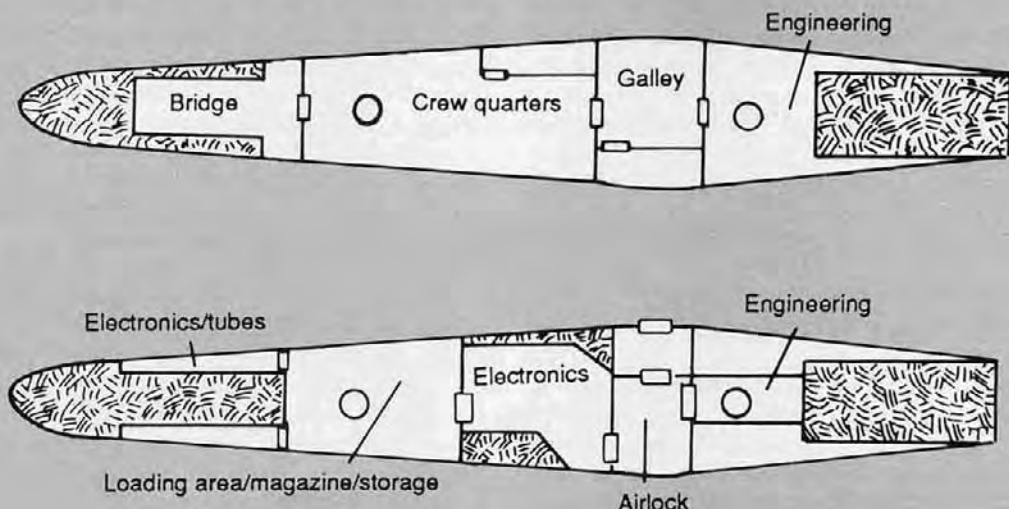
SECOND MISSION

If the PCs do not realize the potential of using the Venries as a cover, one of the NPCs does so. The naval planners decide to equip a small *Sea Dart*-class sub with an electromagnetic device to attract a pod of Venries, which will serve as cover for the sub's intrusion.

Because of their great skill and courage (as exemplified by their survival of the previous ordeal), the PCs are assigned to or hired for the second mission. Naturally, they will receive bonuses for undertaking another mission so soon after their harrowing brush with death. They are accompanied by any NPCs required to fill out the crew. Unmanned drones are launched into the area every 20 minutes. Sensors are also be dropped into the sea at the limits of the danger zone, with the data sent to the submarine.

The *Sea Dart* submarine submerges and cruises around until a pod of Venries is detected. This takes about an hour, using the electromagnetic device in the *Sea Dart* to lure them in. The submarine's systems are shielded to protect them from the electromagnetic emissions of the Venries. The submarine can still use its sonar, but its radar and radio systems are useless while the vessel

Sea Dart-Class Submarine



Type: Submarine *Crew:* 7-20 *Armor:* All Faces: 6 *Signature:* 3 *Evasion:* 2 *Sensor Range:* 20 km *Max Speed:* 70 kph *Cruising Speed:* 35 kph *Combat Movement:* 175 m *Power:* Fuel cell *Endurance:* 96 hours *Price:* Lv80,000.

The *Sea Dart* is a standard small submarine used for a variety of scientific and military missions.

Crews range from seven to 20, depending on the mission.

The *Sea Dart* is equipped with a broad range of sensor/scanner equipment, including sonar, visual systems, radar and so forth.

The outer hull is self sealing.

The double hull and ballast tanks have not been included on the diagram.

The *Sea Dart* on this mission is a military version and has been further modified with a track system that enables it to store two swimmers on the ventral section of the hull and bring them (one at a time) into the modified airlock for boarding.

The *Sea Dart* is equipped with a full supply of diving gear, as well as a supply of armaments (exact weapons are left to the referee's discretion).

Bridge: The bridge contains the vessel's control systems. The submarine can be operated by one person in an emergency (all task rolls are one level higher).

Crew Quarters: This area is equipped with a fixed bathroom facility, but the rest of the sections are modular, enabling the vessel to be tailored for the crew size.

Electronics/Tubes: This area contains the sensor/scanner array, as well as the torpedo tubes. The tubes are smaller than standard tubes and are most often used to fire sensor torpedoes. Special missiles can also be fired.

Loading Area/Magazine/Storage: This area is equipped with an autoloader and magazine on military *Sea Darts*. On scientific vessels, this area contains racks for scientific and sensor torpedoes, and is also used as storage.

Electronics: On military vessels, this area is equipped with sensor and espionage gear. On scientific vessels, this area is equipped with scientific equipment.

Airlock: The airlock area contains diving equipment (including sea sleds, lights and so forth).

Engineering: Adjacent to engineering on the second deck are the fuel cells.

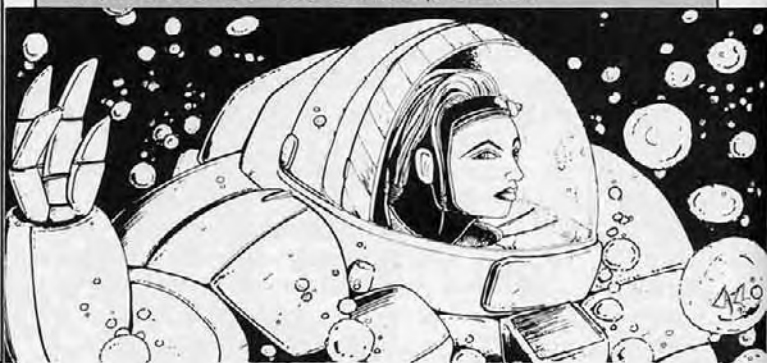
Swimmers

Country: USA *Weight:* 500 kg *Crawl:* N/A *Walk:* 7 m *Trot:* 14 m *Run:* N/A *Swim:* 18 m *Power Supply:* Internal rechargeable power cell *Power Duration:* 24 hours *Integral Armament:* Varies *Area Protected:* All *Armor Value:* 12 *Initiative Penalty:* -4 *Price:* Lv26,000.

A swimmer is a powered suit designed for underwater operations that require a great deal of protection (operating at great depths, combat situations, hostile sea life and so forth). Like combat walkers, the swimmer's limbs are slaved to the pilot's movements, and the unit has an internal monitor. The swimmer has more complex instrumentation because of the greater requirements of operating underwater. The swimmers are also equipped with powerful underwater propulsion systems, and they have air tanks and a recycling system built in (good for the duration of the suit's power supply).

Swimmer types depends on the mission. Construction swimmers are equipped with welding and cutting equipment, as well as other tools. Scientific models are equipped with cameras and special sensors. Military models are armed, and often carry mines or explosives. Armament typically consists of lasers, and some models carry small torpedo weapons.

For this mission, swimmers are armed with shoulder-mounted Quin Darlan MK 4-A1 PGW and an arm-mounted equivalent of a Rortmann LK-1fKz. The swimmers are also equipped with the tools required to construct the temporary link, as well as six blocks of Plastique-9 each.



The interior of the alien structure is similar to human structures in many respects (the builders were humanoid). However, there are many alien aspects about the structure, and the interior seems vaguely "off" to humans. Lighting is orange, and the interior is kept warm (about 88° F). Equipment and control panels feel odd because of the slightly different hand structure of the alien builders (their fingers were longer than human fingers; they had retractable claws; and the bone configuration was different).

The pyramid consists of four levels. The lowest level consists of the airlocks. Level two is the living quarters, three is the control level and four is the computer access. Interior doors and lift shafts work automatically for anyone using them.

Equipment Storage: Each equipment storage room on level one contains four alien swimmers (see below).

Living Quarters: The living quarters level is empty, and the rooms have been carefully secured. Each room contains bunk beds for humanoid beings, plus two retractable desks and chairs. Based on the size of the beds, the users averaged about two meters in height. Each desk has a keyboard, screen and interface cable (not compatible with human interface plugs). If PCs type on the keyboard, images appear slightly in front of the screen (it is a 3-D screen with holographic capacity). The keyboards can be removed from the desks and would be very useful to human linguists. The computer is useless to PCs since they don't know the language. Safety features prevent them from doing any damage through random actions.

Larger Living Quarters: This room is like the smaller living quarters but is designed for one-being occupancy. The keyboard set-up is more complex than the others, and this keyboard will not respond if the PCs try to use it (they don't have the activation key).

Eating/Rec Area: This area contains several recessed tables and chairs, as well as recessed game consoles. The controls to the recessed items are simple buttons located on the wall. Most of the games are interface varieties (not compatible with human interface plugs) but some are basic 3-D video games, and there are some games with pieces, maps and dice.

Food Preparation: This room contains empty food preparation machines. They have been shut down and will not do anything.

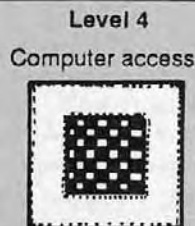
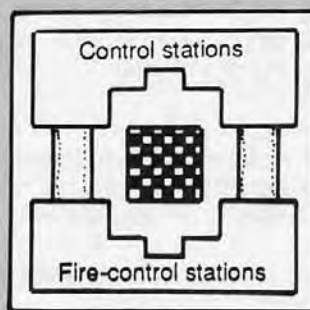
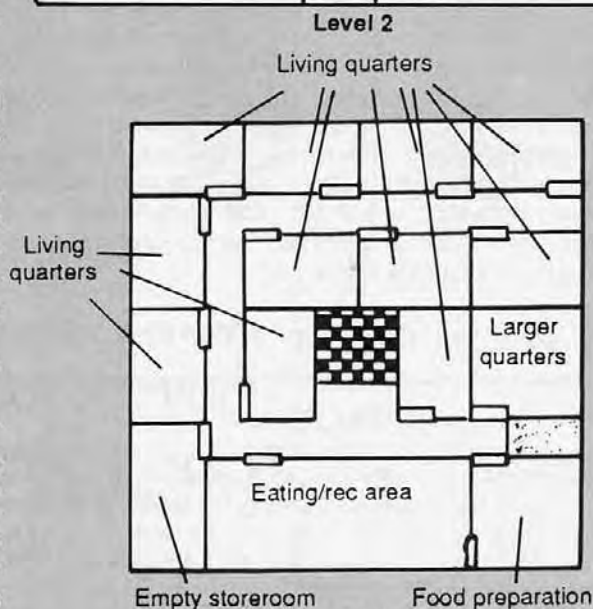
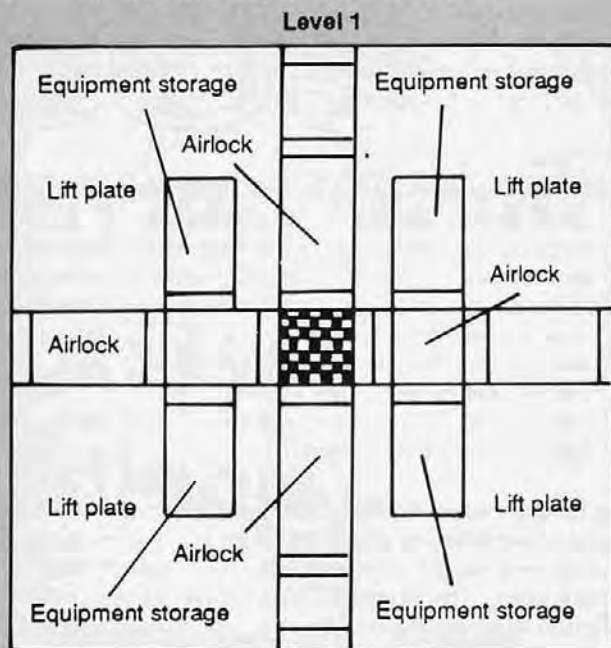
Control Stations: This area contains advanced electronic equipment, most of which is equipped for interface operations. It looks similar enough to human control systems to be recognizable as sort of a traffic-control area, probably for military operations. The systems are all active, and study will reveal that the displays are showing the area around the base. The disruption created by the PCs' Venries is quite evident. Human voices emanate from this room, which may surprise the PCs until they realize that the voices are from radio broadcasts the base's systems have picked up.

Fire-Control Stations: This area contains equipment similar to that in the control stations room. However, this room contains what appears to be fire-control equipment. The displays show the area around the base, and several displays replay the base's previous attacks. The PCs cannot work any of the controls as they have been taken over by the computer.

Other equipment in the room looks like spaceship or submarine control systems. Several of the displays in these systems show what appears to be a course plotted to take the base closer to shore. Several human cities are prominently marked on the maps.

Computer Access: The fourth level is the computer-access level—the base computer's access area for repairs and modifications. The computer is highly advanced and is an artificial intelligence (but not self aware). It is capable of very complex planning and plan implementation, but has some limitations (it doesn't have much in the way of imagination and is restricted to control over the base's systems).

Alien Structure



is in the field. Communication is maintained via a laser communicator (which becomes increasingly unreliable the deeper the sub goes), and several radio buoys are available to send messages. These buoys consist of a recorder and a broadcaster. If launched, they are destroyed two minutes after they start transmitting. To see if anything exciting happens on the way in, roll 1D10 each hour. On a result of 1, roll on the following chart:

Roll Event

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Electromagnetic device fails, and the Venries begin to swim away. Repair difficulty is up to the referee. |
| 2-3 | Large aquatic predators attack the Venries and begin to drive them away. The PCs must deal with them or lose their cover. |
| 4 | Minor annoyance (strange smell in air system, lights flicker). Task will be Simple. |
| 5 | Minor malfunction in the submarine (hatch stuck, minor systems failure, etc.). Task will be Routine. |
| 6 | Serious malfunction in the submarine (sonar failure, drive failure). Task will be Difficult. |

After three drones are destroyed, the sensors have gathered enough information (from detecting energy emissions from the fire control and weapon systems being fired) to determine the location of whatever is doing the shooting. This information is transmitted to the submarine.

When the PCs near the coordinate points, the sub's sonar (if in use) detects a large pyramid on the ocean floor. As the sub gets closer, the PCs see the structure via the submarine's visual sensors. The object is a massive pyramid, coated with slime and the local analogs to barnacles and seaweed. The top of the pyramid is, in contrast, quite clean (the weapons firing destroyed the coating material). If the pyramid fires while the sub is close to it, the PCs see the top of the pyramid emit bluish arcs of energy. On each side of the pyramid is what appears to be a docking tube. The tube does not fit the *Sea Dart*. However, two people in swimmers can use equipment from the sub to construct a temporary link.

Task: To construct temporary link: Routine. Mechanical. 2 minutes.

PROBLEMS

The base computer has decided to declare war on its enemies. It plans to move the base (at 20 kph) to bring the human cities it has detected into range. It will start to move 10 minutes after the PCs are on-board the base and will take it two hours to get into firing range.

The temporary link the PCs initiated is not strong enough to hold the submarine at dock once the structure begins to move. But there is enough warning for the sub to disengage before the link is wrecked. Keeping the submarine in a safe docking position will require an initial docking roll and an additional roll every five minutes:

Task: To dock safely: Routine. Sea Vehicle. Absolute. 2 minutes.

Referee: Failure to remain docked causes the sub to back off safely, and another docking attempt must be made. Mishaps result in damage to the docking link or the submarine (or both).

Task: To remain docked: Routine. Sea Vehicle. Instant.

Referee: See above.

If the base gets within range, it can seriously damage the city (killing thousands) before the military can destroy it. It will take the military 15 minutes to destroy the base, and this will involve heavy losses. If the PCs are on-board the base when it is destroyed, they will perish along with it.

Unfortunately, the PCs cannot just waltz into the base, blow up the computer and sub off under the sunset. The computer has several methods of defense, including alien swimmers and defense robots.

ALIEN SWIMMERS

Country: Alien **Weight:** 400 kg **Crawl:** N/A **Walk:** 8 m **Trot:** 16 m **Run:** N/A **Swim:** 20 m **Power Supply:** Internal battery **Power Duration:** 96 hours **Integral Armament:** Two cutting lasers, function as Rortmann Lk-1fKz when switched over to pulse mode (each pulse uses two minutes of power) **Sensor Range:** 30 km **Signature:** 1 Area **Protected:** All **Armor Value:** 18 **Initiative Penalty:** -3.

Each of the alien swimmers is equipped for remote computer control. Fortunately, only two of them have legs (they were designed to work within sunken vessels and on the ocean floor). These swimmers have oversized arms and legs, and have a streamlined, semi-spherical central body. They look remarkably like B-movie humanoid sea monster robots.

Under computer control, the suits function as if they were controlled by a Veteran NPC. They are damaged as per the chart in the **Equipment Guide**, page 31. An operator hit knocks out the computer control link and renders the unit inactive. The suits have an air supply-recycling system good for 96 hours. The controls are simple enough that a human who is familiar with combat walkers could operate one (increase task difficulty rolls by 1 point due to the fact that the swimmers are of alien manufacture—for example, a simple task would require a 3+).

The other (legless) swimmers are the same, except they cannot walk or trot, and they swim 30 meters.

DEFENSE ROBOTS

Armor Value: 0.9 **Life Level:** 20 **Signature:** -8 **Initiative:** 11.

The base is equipped with six defense robots (two on each level, except the fourth). The robots are dull gray spheres with mechanical spider legs sticking out of them. The legs can be magnetized, enabling the units to climb walls and ceilings, so they can drop on the PCs' heads (which should endear them to the PCs). The front section is armed with a small laser weapon (treat as a Mueller-Rivera P-3), and each unit has what looks like small buzz saws on telescoping arms (treat as knives). Units are very difficult to hit. They have IR, visual and motion sensors, and are computer controlled.

RESOLUTION

Once the humans enter the base, the computer will take five minutes to determine that they are invaders and not returned base personnel. Once it comes to his conclusion, it will need it five more minutes to get its defense robots on line and five more minutes to ready the walking swimmers for combat. It will do its best to kill everything in the base. It cannot control the doors, lift plate, life support, or lights (thanks to accumulating software glitches).

A moderate explosive charge or a few rounds from a plasma gun or grenade launcher would suffice to put the alien base computer out of commission. Unfortunately, the destruction of the computer activates the base's final defense system—it will self-destruct 10 minutes after the computer is destroyed. The destruction of the computer is followed by a truly horrific warning siren, then an alien voice speaking a regular intervals (the 10-minute countdown). The base's explosion will destroy the inside of the base and crack the hull open, but will not have much of an exterior effect (a shock wave will knock any vessels in the area about and will kill a lot of fish).

If the PCs stop the computer, they will be heroes (until the sensation fades). If they fail to stop the computer but live, they will be respected for trying. If they retrieve anything from the base, numerous scientific organizations will be interested in acquiring the equipment for study. Ω

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JACKED IN

Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook covers the subject of neural jacks. The following article adds some optional rules and equipment for use in your 2300 AD campaign.

The capability of the human brain to process data is vast, but it can still be fatigued and overloaded. Continual use of a neural jack can result in mild to serious side effects. After 12 hours of constant use, a character should make the following task roll:

Task: To avoid overload. Difficult. Determination. Instant.

If successful, the character may continue his activities unhampered. Otherwise, he begins to suffer from severe headaches. All tasks attempted after this point will be at one difficulty level higher than normal, due to a loss of concentration. If the character unjacks, recovery will require 1D6 hours of rest.

If the character remains jacked-in, another task roll will be required after 12 hours (at the Formidable level). If this second roll is successful, the character will receive one light wound, and all subsequent tasks are performed at two difficulty levels higher than normal. If unsuccessful, the character will become unconscious and suffer one serious wound. At this point, he must receive medical attention promptly to avoid permanent damage.

Task: To avoid permanent neural damage. Difficult. Medical and Automated. One

hour. Requires a surgeon and hospital, or a medical technician and automed.

If the task is unsuccessful, the character suffers a 1D6 loss from Intelligence and Education. If successful, the character recovers normally with no permanent damage.

Characters who rely on chipped modifiers to enhance their skills or attributes can become psychologically dependent on them. A character who regularly uses a chipped enhancement can roll a task to avoid these addictive effects. This roll is made at the referee's discretion, depending on the amount of usage.

Task: To avoid addiction. Routine. Determination. Instant.

If unsuccessful, the character will be unwilling to do anything without having something chipped in. Every month afterward, the character may attempt to break the addiction, which is a task.

Task: To break addiction. Difficult. Determination. One day.

If the task is unsuccessful, the character may try again in one month, and every month after that, but the difficulty level is now Formidable. At this point, the character becomes paranoid, or even catatonic, if forced to act without being

By Matthew S. Prager

jack into something. Once a character successfully breaks the addiction, this will no longer be a problem.

NEURAL JACK ATTACHMENTS

Jack Expander: While it is true that a character may only have one neural jack, its capabilities may be expanded by the use of this adapter. The adapter plugs into a character's neural jack and provides three parallel ports for input. Therefore, the character can access three separate sources simultaneously (e.g., one computer and two chipped skills). This unit is bulky and cannot be hidden by a character's hair, unless it is very long. The added input fatigues the brain faster than normal. Task rolls to avoid cerebral overload are made every four hours instead of every 12 hours.

Price: Lv500. Wt: 10 grams.

Sleep Inducer: This chip is designed to put the user into a deep, alpha-state sleep,

then wake him after a predetermined amount of time. The chip is generally sold in standard time increments of two, four, six and eight hours. A character who is using this chip may be hard to rouse from sleep. Also, a character who regularly uses a sleep inducer may find it hard to sleep without one.

Price: Lv50. Wt: N/A.

BLACK MARKET CHIPS

Black market chips lack the flashy packaging that a commercial chip needs to induce the consumer to buy. These chips are very plain looking, and carry little or no identification.

Characters should be careful when using a black market chip, as the production standards are unreliable, and use of the chip can cause severe injury. On a 1D100 roll of 99-100, a black market chip is defective. When the character inserts a defective chip for the first time, he will suffer

one serious wound and will fall unconscious. The task roll to avoid permanent neural

damage must be made to determine the outcome of the situation. Ω

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TRAVELLER *News Service*

Anaxias/Delphi (1724 A253A85-D)

198-1126

¶Margaret's government was today rocked by charges of genocide, said to be conducted against the Geonee in Massilia Sector with Margaret's knowledge and tacit approval. The charges were presented by Gemma Kasgilli, heading a delegation from the Erasmus Alliance, an independent human rights group based in Massilia.

¶Kasgilli charged that the Marquess Tanzer, a noble loyal to Margaret, has been waging a "war of extermination" against the significant numbers of Geonee refugees that have been retreating trailward from their destroyed homes in the Shiwonee Subsector (J/Massilia).

¶The Geonee are a minor human race native to Shiwonee (1430 Massilia) and also comprise the majority population of the seven other worlds of the Geonee Cultural Region centered in the Shiwonee Subsector. The Geonee's main claim to fame heretofore is their protestation, supported by little independent scholarship, that they are the Ancients. The Marquess Gervaise Tanzer is a retired admiral best known for organizing the major shipbuilding programs that empowered Margaret's operations against the Solomani offensives in Diaspora and the Old Expanses.

¶A government spokesman was almost incoherent with rage when he appeared before the hastily assembled press to answer the charges, which he characterized as "preposterous." He pointed out that Margaret's government exercises "little enough control in Massilia as it is," and therefore to blame events in the embattled sector on Margaret is "inconceivable." The most likely explanation for the story, he finally reasoned, was that it is a propaganda ploy by the remnants of the Vermene.

¶Margaret's senior press aide, Jules Partraum, later appeared to retract portions of the earlier statement that dealt with Margaret's ability to control Massilia Sector. "The earlier statement was incomplete. Margaret's influence in Massilia and her ability to protect loyal subjects there remains unchanged. The remark was intended to point out that were these charges true, it would indicate that Margaret's substantial powers had not yet been brought to bear against them. But as these charges are clearly and patently false, such an exercise would be superfluous."

Dlan/Ielish (1021 A8D1ADE-G)

210-1126

¶Archduke and self-proclaimed emperor Dulinor appeared in public today to announce the appointment of Tredek Jurisor to the Dulinor Astrin Ielishian chair as head of the Department of Imperial History at Dlan University. The position has stood vacant since the dramatic departure of Professor Ililek Kuligaan on 212-1123. Kuligaan is still officially a fugitive from a warrant issued by Dulinor himself, although he is believed to be now residing in the Federation of Daibei or a location farther trailward.

¶Tredek Jurisor is the former Ielish Minister of Information and Communication, appointed to that post by Dulinor on 101-1122. Before that, Jurisor was one of the Virasan clergy instrumental in revising some of the most basic tenets of the faith in the controversial 457th Khanu. The Virasan Enlightenment movement, of which Jurisor is a founder, believes that death in combat in the service of Dlan can still entitle a believer to full revelation in the afterlife. Until the 457th Khanu, Virasan theology held that only a nonviolent death on Dlan would reach that goal.

¶In making the announcement, Dulinor praised Jurisor for "a life given to public service, in which he has excelled. His contributions these past years, through trying times, have laid the groundwork for future growth in purpose and power. This growth will enable us, in the not too distant future, to return to Capital and finally destroy the murderous usurper Lucan, and establish rightful leadership over the Imperium."

¶Farthik Dorsokuguur, a vocal critic of Jurisor and leader of the Virasan Orthodox sect, was unable to comment as he has been under "house" arrest in his parish for the past two years.

Anaxias/Delphi (1724 A253A85-D)

248-1126

¶A planned recreational trip by Margaret and her twins, Julia and Paulo, was interrupted yesterday by crowds that demanded an explanation of the charges of genocide in Massilia. Margaret, who has thus far refused to become involved in the controversy, did not respond, but instead canceled the trip and returned to the family quarters at the Blaine Tukera mansion, where the family lives during this season.

¶This follows several weeks of increasingly disillusioned public response to the initial charges, presented 50 days ago. The negative reaction to these charges and the government's unwillingness to meaningfully address them became widespread when several high officials, treating the charges as a joke, began publicly referring to the "Geoneecide." This was followed by the arrival of a statement from the Marquess Tanzer which claimed that the Geonee "refugees" were in fact pirates, and were despoiling the already frail economy of the area. In addition, the Marquess continued, when possible the Geonee were not killed, but instead pressed into a forced labor program where the marauders would help to repair the shipping that they had damaged and destroyed. He regretted that on occasion innocent Geonee may have been killed by preemptive attacks if their ships appeared to be engaged in piracy. "However, we must remember that this is wartime, and these events will occur," Tanzer observed. He also produced a report made by his troops which indicated that, because of their short stature, fatal wounds are more common among Geonee in firefights. "My troops have found that it is difficult to wound and capture the Geonee in combat. This is because a wound which would only wound a normal human will more often kill a Geonee, because when you're that short all of your vital organs are packed much more tightly together."

¶When Margaret's government did not immediately condemn the cavalier attitudes and racism inherent in the statement, the public outcry grew still further, now with the additional charges that Margaret was assenting to a slave trade. "This is something which even Lucan has not yet done," said an Erasmus Alliance official.

¶When confronted by the crowd, which included several Geonee, Margaret did not respond, but turned to her entourage and departed. Lip readers present in the crowd claim that she remarked to one of her aides, "What would they have me say to my biggest shipbuilder?"

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Trin/Spinward Marches (3235 A894A96-F)

324-1126

¶Routine traffic at the Trin naval base was interrupted yesterday by the unexpected arrival of an *Azhanti High Lightning*-class frontier cruiser in the traffic pattern. Although there has been no official acknowledgment of the ship's visit, naval officers speaking off the record have allowed the following story to be pieced together:

¶Officers at system traffic control report that when it was first detected, it was thought that the cruiser was a *Trekhyair*-operated ship, cruising outside of its normal patrol area. The *Trekhyair*, the Aslan-crewed "Patrol," operates four examples of the class, re-commissioned from 1120 to 1124. However, its transponder code was not a *Trekhyair* ID code, but was rather an older, pre-Rebellion Imperial Navy ID code. Permission to enter orbit was initially denied, as forces of Lucan's Imperium are believed to still operate a handful of the *Lightning*-class vessels. Officers were then surprised when the mystery vessel transmitted a verbal "Argon Blue" identification code which allowed the vessel to dock at Trin's Naval Inactive Ships Facility. The little-known "Argon Blue" codes are said to be a system of one-time ID codes which involve the verification of the contents of sealed documents, sets of which are present at all Imperial naval bases. The rare use of these codes is thought to be associated with high-ranking Imperial nobles.

¶Upon docking, the ship, which proved to be *Arrival Vengeance*, missing since 329-1123, disgorged a small party of officers who proceeded directly to the commanding officer of the Inactive Ships Facility. There, they presented a sealed document to the commander, Rear Admiral Brian Gou, and returned to their ship. *Arrival Vengeance* was refueled and departed the base several hours later.

¶The sealed document is reported to have contained a voucher for the use of the ship, and an apology. Witnesses state that both documents were dated in 1123 and signed by Archduke Norris.

Cymbeline/Solomani Rim (2527 ?9F4?40-E)

063-1127

¶A large "black war" strike force has annihilated the surface of Cymbeline, blanketing it with nuclear explosions from apparently hundreds of warheads.

¶Miraculously, several communities still cling to life in their settlements, situated at the bottom of the deep gorges that the surface of this world. Cymbeline's capital still survives, and government leaders are organizing expeditions to contact the other settlements to see how many still exist, and to unite them to resist an invasion. One contact team leader explained, "We are alive because of the gorges we live in. Whoever thought they could kill us all by bombarding us like they would a surface-inhabited world wasn't thinking. This world has made us tough, and they'll learn that lesson even harder if they try to invade us. But they did destroy our surface transport system, so we have to act quickly to restore contact with the rest of the world so that we can unite to defeat an invasion. If they hit us now while we're divided, it will make it harder for us to resist. But we will, and we'll make them regret what they've done."

¶However, it is not yet known who is responsible for the strike. Contact has not been re-established with the system defense squadron. They may have been overwhelmed by the strike force, or may have cooperated with a strike by a militant Solomani faction. If it was a strike from Daibei, or Margaret's Domain, it might be only one phase of a much larger offensive into the Solomani core.

Mora/Spinward Marches (3124 AA99AC7-F)

110-1127

¶Archduke Norris Aella Aledon arrived this morning at the Giyachii grand esplanade to find it packed with over 200,000 spectators, all eager to hear the message he was scheduled to deliver. There had been tremendous speculation about the content of the message since it was announced three weeks ago that Norris would address the entire Domain of Deneb. The dozens of remote recording drones floating above the crowd focused on Norris' balcony belonged to news services and also to the Domain government, which will distribute recordings to every world of the Domain.

¶"My sisters and brothers," Norris began, "it is time to put away the trappings of childhood. The past, no matter how vivid, no matter how *preferable*, is not ours to grasp. We must let it go. The Empire will not save us. The Emperor, luminous and gallant, will never lead a relief fleet through the raiders to reclaim us, to return us to our rightful place in an imperial family. Because there is no Empire. There is, I must myself admit, no Emperor. The Empire is populated, where it is still populated at all, increasingly by madmen. They cannot save us, *nor can we save them*. We in the spinward extents must chart our own future."

¶During the course of his address, the Archduke explained that his government has made exhaustive efforts to regain contact with other portions of the "Empire"—it is notable that throughout the address he avoided all use of the word "Imperium"—and discuss the possibility of reunification. "These efforts have not been rewarded," he reported. "We should not, indeed, we will never, close off our options to reunify. But we cannot simply wait for that to happen. We must do more than merely keep the ends out for the tie that binds."

¶He then moved to a general discussion of his positive visions. This touched on the need for a new government and new relationships with surrounding powers. Norris described the isolation of the Domain "behind the claw" as an advantage which could give time to explore "our local potentials: our worlds, our stars, our creatures, our own minds."

¶The crowd, which immediately recognized the address as a major turning point in their own history, was attentive and virtually silent throughout the delivery. It will take several months for copies of the address to reach the most distant Domain worlds, and for the responses to return. But here on Mora, Norris was greeted with an 18-minute ovation at the end of the address, during which time he graciously acknowledged the crowd before finally leaving the balcony to return to his duties.

¶"Somewhere, lost in time, someone first asked the question, 'Am I my brother's keeper? Am I my sister's keeper? If I don't act to secure and defend the well-being of my neighbor, won't someone else do it for me? I ask you, every citizen of the Marches, of Deneb, of Troy and Reft. Look around you. *We are those who are left to carry on whatever work the Empire began*. Am I responsible for you? Are you responsible for me? Am I my brother's keeper? The answer then, now, and always, is 'Yes.' Ω

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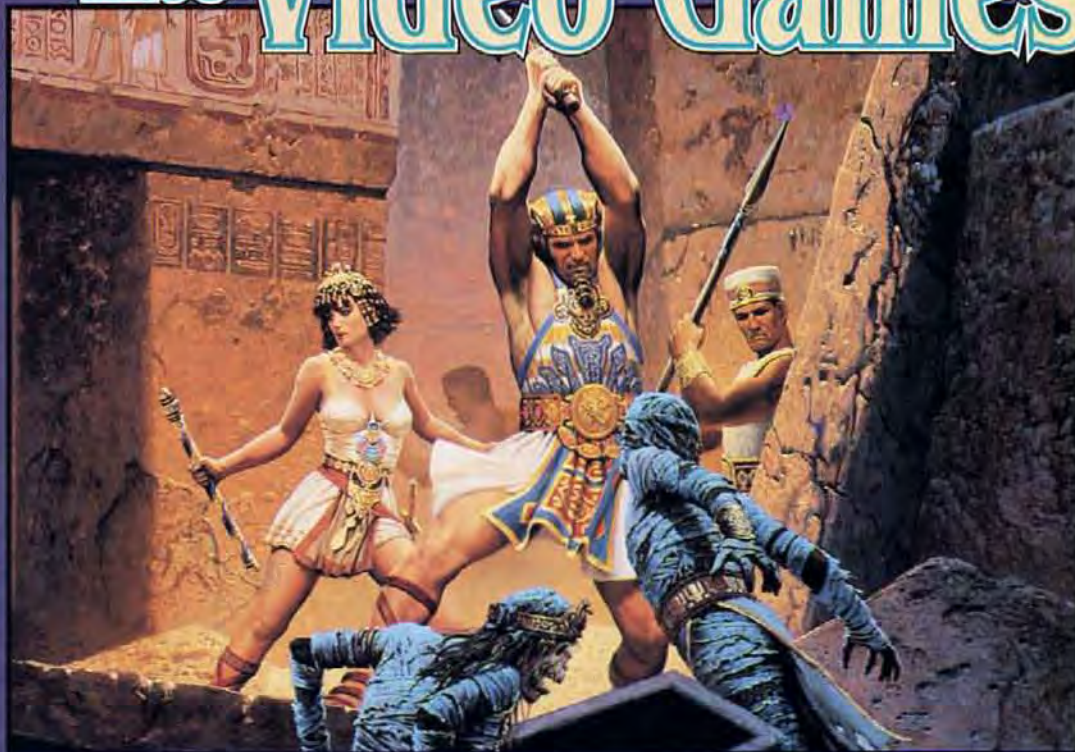
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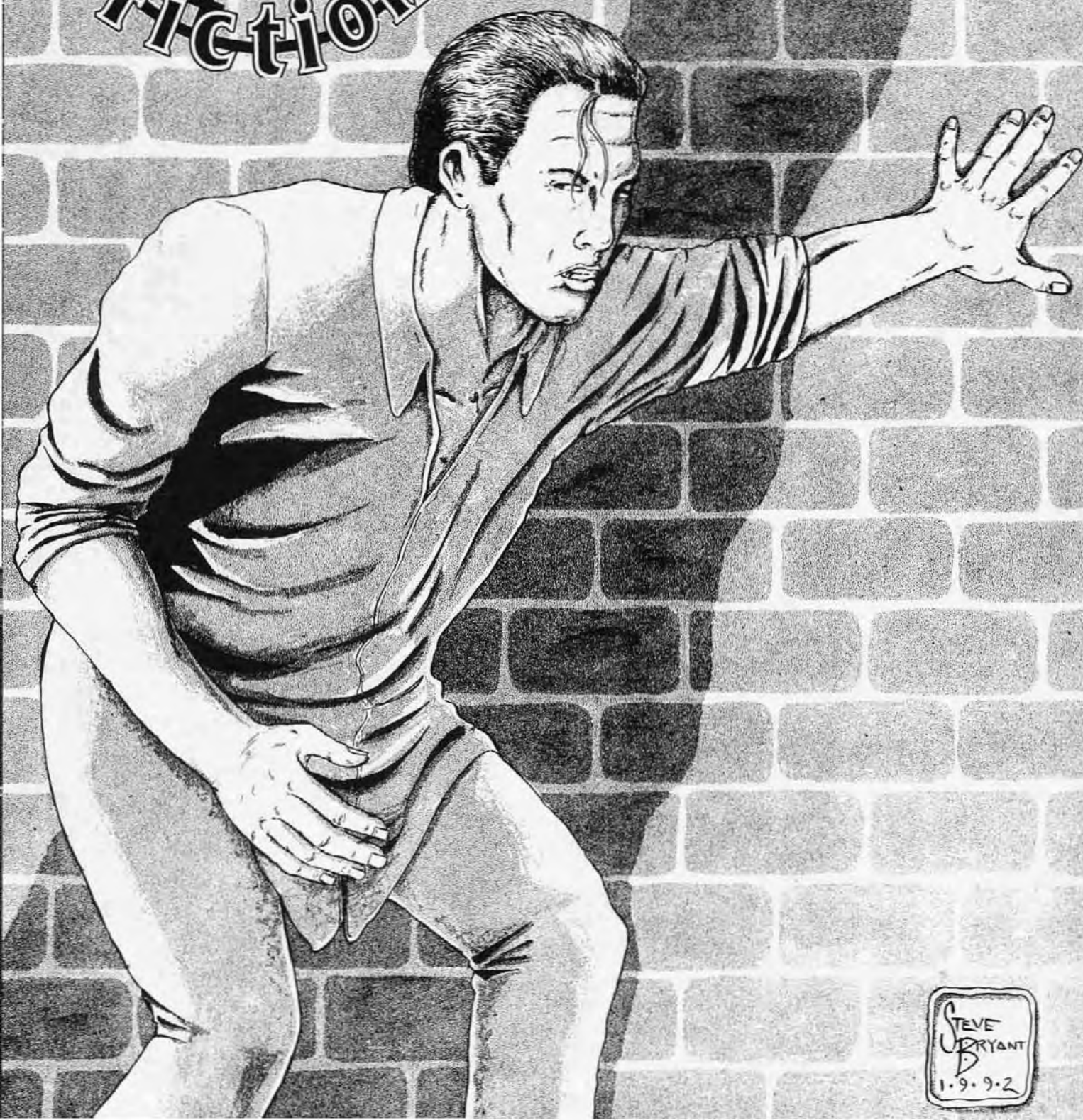


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Shadowrun
Fiction

Michael A. Stackpole

FAIR GAME²



STEVE
BRYANT
1.9.92

A LoneStar cop showed me the body. It was Albion, a kid I'd known and tried to help once. Now he was the fourth victim in a series of murders that no one would ever investigate.

Kid Stealth—the Murder Machine—pointed out that the killer had not just murdered Albion, but had stalked him first. Stealth had great disdain for the idea of people killing for fun, but he showed no willingness to help me find Albion's murderer. He demanded and I gave him cab fare back to Raven's headquarters, then I launched into what I knew Stealth saw as one of my silly crusades.

Rather quickly I discovered that Albion had gotten a job at the Pacific Northwest Huntsman's Club. After getting some quick background, I tricked my way into the club by claiming I had a dinner date with Selene Reece, a member who was supposed to be in Alaska. Selene surprised me by showing up for the date I had inserted into the club's computer. When I outlined the situation to her, she promised to help and even offered to intercede for me with the club's director. I begged off because I was late for a dinner date with Lynn Ingold—a woman who had gotten seriously under my skin. But Selene and I made plans for a rendezvous the next night at the club.

I hoped I'd learn who killed Albion. But even more pressing, I wanted to know whether I was stalking Selene—or she was stalking me. I could see something in her eyes, and it was a reflection of the hunger burning in my own.

Wolf season was open.

IV

Wolf season almost closed again because Lynn's great-aunt Sadie tried to get me into a captive breeding program. "Oh, Wolfgang, you are such a gentleman. You two make a lovely couple. You'll have wonderful children—they'll be smart and handsome."

Luckily, Lynn fended off her aunt's comments, which left me time to deal with the Old One. For some reason, he had joined forces with Sadie, and he spent most of the evening divided between complaining that my prime rib was too well done and praising Lynn. *This is the bitch for you, Longtooth. Her eyes are bright; her ruddy coat is long; and she is cunning. Your pups will be strong and have sharp teeth.*

I was sure Lynn, who had once mentioned a desire to breast feed children, would love that last bit. Fortunately, Sadie started talking about the 22 cats with which she lived, which cooled the Old One's opinion of his ally. Even so, through the rest of the evening, he yipped encouragingly any time Lynn did anything he felt should make me proud.

The dreams I had enjoyed earlier in the day did not turn out to be literally prophetic, but they functioned perfectly in an allegorical sense. After we dropped her great-aunt with her parents, Lynn and I spent some time wandering through the market, laughing about what Sadie had said. As Lynn doesn't know about the Old One yet, I didn't tell her his comments, but I let my laughter batter him into grumbling retreat. That was good, because we later retreated to my apartment and engaged in activities that would have had him yipping encouragement to Lynn on a nearly incessant basis.

Lynn woke me up early—the hour on the clock wasn't even close to double digits—then showered and headed off to work. She normally didn't spend the full evening with me because she shared a corporate suite with her folks, but since Sadie was using her room, her folks chose to believe her when she said she was staying with a friend.

She asked if we were going to get together later, but I told her Raven was coming back into town and I had something to do. Because we met after Raven, Stealth and I saved her from kidnappers, she has a vague idea of what I do. She is a pacifist, so she prefers not to know the details of my adventures. Given that I was planning to meet Selene later, I decided not clarifying what I was doing was a good thing.

I crashed for another couple of hours, then got up close to noon.

I decided that I needed a new suit for the night's adventure, so I dressed quickly and headed out. The Old One's grumbling started to give me a headache, but I managed to ignore him and it. Hopping into the Fenris, I headed downtown and started a walking tour of the haberdasheries.

After a few false starts, I settled on a black, French-cut suit with a double-breasted blazer. The tailor who measured me to alter it asked if I would be "heavy" or "thick" while wearing it, but I shook my head. Wearing a gun or a Kevlar vest was not in order for dinner at one of the city's most elegant clubs. I picked out a tie and shirt to go with the suit, then had lunch and a beer at Kell's while the tailor worked on the alterations.

As the night crept close, a sense of impending doom began to weigh upon me. Normally, I put that down to Stealth being in the vicinity, but I suspected that Lynn and Selene were at the root of it. As I thought things over, I could see myself speeding in the Fenris toward a cliff with a nasty dropoff. A cloud of dust obscured what was behind me, but I had the distinct feeling that it hid an equally devastating drop.

I knew I loved Lynn, and I hoped she felt the same way about me. I had never before fallen so hard for a woman, nor had I ever lasted as long with one. Most women decided I was trouble and gave me my walking papers before things became serious. Getting rejected like that did hurt, but we usually managed to part on friendly terms, which helped take a lot of the sting out of it. Besides, plenty of other women were willing to offer me solace, so I learned to live within the myth that someday I'd find the woman meant for me.

Now that day had dawned, and I found it more terrifying than most of the gunbattles I'd lived through. In those fights, the worst that could happen was that I could die. In this situation, I could end up *living*. I'd have responsibilities and obligations. While Lynn was more than worth all that, a huge chunk of me saw my window on freedom snapping shut.

Enter Selene. She and Lynn were of the same species and gender, but the similarities ended there. Selene was very aggressive. Being pursued by someone as powerful and desirable as her was one hell of an ego-steroid. I was staring at a future imprisoned with one woman, and Selene was handing me a "Get Out of Jail Free" card.

The Pacific Northwest Huntsman's Club was downtown and not too far from the RJR Nabisco-Sears corporate tower where Lynn lived, so I parked the Fenris in an alley about four blocks from the club. I set the anti-theft system at three chirps, figuring the alley would keep down the number of injured bystanders. Pocketing the remote control, I set off for the club.

The heavy-set gentleman who ushered me to the bar the night before was again at his station. He smiled when he saw me and beckoned me to follow him. "This way, Mr. Kies. Ms. Reece has already been seated."

Selene slipped out of the corner booth as I arrived. She wore a cerulean blue chemise with hair-thin straps beneath a darker blue *crepe du chine* jacket and matching pants. She offered me her hand and I kissed it, bowing slightly as I did so. She laughed, and we both sat down.

The maitre'd offered me a menu, but I shook my head. "I trust your judgment, Selene."

She smiled and ordered a split of champagne and raw oysters for an appetizer. "For the main course, we will have the venison steaks with mushrooms and wild rice."

"Very good, ma'am."

As he withdrew, she looked at me carefully. "I trust you like venison."

I nodded. "Get it yourself?"

"No. The last deer I shot was a year ago, and I gave some of the meat to another member. He is repaying the favor." Her smile grew. "I didn't get the oysters myself either, but I trust you will enjoy them nonetheless."

"I am sure I will."

Our champagne arrived, and she sat back to sip her glass. "You are even more fascinating than I thought, Wolfgang. Until I did some research, I had no idea you were associated with Richard Raven. From what I have read, you have hunted enough to be a member here."

I shrugged. "I bag vermin, mostly. Doc keeps me around for amusement value. And my friends call me Wolf."

"You are too modest, Wolf." Her voice lingered over my name, and the prospect of her becoming an intimate friend made me smile. "From what I understand, a number of the local street gangs consider you quite dangerous."

"I gather, Selene, various species of big game think of you in the same way."

"Touché. We are a pair, it seems, evenly matched."

I raised my glass in a salute. "To being a perfect match."

"Indeed."

The rest of the evening went from there to become quite hot. We both drank more champagne than we should have, but we stopped at silly on our way to being drunk. We waged a war of innuendo and double-entendre that promised much for the night until the maitre'd came over and informed her the club's director was in his office.

Selene became serious with that news, then broke into a giggle when the maitre'd walked away from us. "I suppose we should take care of business before we get down to business, yes, Mr. Kies?" She looped her purse strap over her left shoulder and slid from the booth.

I nodded almost soberly. "Indeed, Ms. Reece."

I followed her from the club dining room and up some stairs. We passed down a corridor that took us beyond the dining room below and ended at a double-door. As we approached, I heard a click, and the doors opened for us. Without a second thought, I walked on into the dark room.

Before I could even begin to ponder why the room was as dimly lit as it was, fire ignited in my spine. I heard a faint crackling sound and felt the agony convulsing my body centered on a spot between my shoulder blades. I tried to turn, but given that my equilibrium had succumbed to the alcohol and the electricity running through me had clobbered my muscles, I dropped hard to the floor.

Selene hooked a toe beneath my chest and flipped me over onto my back. In her left hand I saw the stunner she'd used on me. She hit the switch, letting a jagged blue energy line spring to life between the two electrodes on the end. My body jerked reflexively, and pain neurons fired again just for the heck of it. She watched me and slowly began to smile.

"Forgive me for this."

I thought, at first, she was speaking to me, but I was wrong. From my perspective on the floor, everything looked very tall. This included the horseshoe-shaped high bench that ran around from one corner of the room to the other. Seated behind the bench, in tall chairs with split oval tops and silhouetted by the backlight, a dozen members of the club looked down at me.

Suddenly a light from above and behind a chair flashed on. It illuminated the snarling face of a mounted bear's head. "I have an inquiry," a man with a deep, wheezy voice called out.

"Yes, Brother Bear?" Selene said, bowing her head. When she spoke, a light flashed on behind an empty chair. It illuminated a huge, translucent snake that I thought just might have been a Central American Moon Python.

"I believe, Sister Snake, that you have already hunted a Street Ape this month."

"Valid point, Brother Bear, but this one is special. He is a threat to us, but he is likely the greatest challenge any of us have known. Also, because of the chance of discovery last night, I was unable to obtain a bloodlock. Because of the rules, I do not really have a kill allotted to me."

Another light flashed on, revealing the head of a sable unicorn

with an ivory spire twisting up and out of its skull. It was located at the keystone position in the semicircle. "Sister Snake is correct. This one is hers to hunt."

"Thank you, Grandmaster." Selene dropped to one knee and gave me a second jolt of juice by pressing the stunner to my chest. I defibrillated up into the air and back down, then lay there like a gummy-chiphead.

She kissed me hard on the lips. "Nothing personal, Wolf, but it's the hunt. I know you'll be legions better than Albion."

She stood and took a step back. I heard a click, and the floor dropped away from beneath me. I started sliding downward headfirst, which, since I still couldn't control my limbs, did not make me very happy. As the slide cut into a downward spiral, my dinner started to come back on me, with the oysters leading the break for freedom. The champagne, being stirred up in my stomach, started gathering for a belch that increased my desire to vomit.

Suddenly, the slide ended. When my shoulders hit the canvas padding, I did an involuntary somersault and landed flat on my stomach. I bounced once and abandoned the fight against my stomach. When I landed again, I puked up everything from dessert to the peanuts I'd had at the bar the night before.

I tried to fight the dry heaves, but they had an ally working from inside my head. *Yes, Longtooth, purge yourself of the poisons. Let me fill you. Let me help you. We will find this bitch that is hunting you, and we will slay her.* Visions of flashing fangs and bright blood filled my mind as the Old One encouraged me.

"No," I wheezed. Kicking weakly, I pushed myself away from my liquid diet. I had managed to form my left hand into a fist, so I opened it and grabbed canvas. I pulled myself far enough from the puddle to put my right hand down, then levered myself over to the wall of the small room into which I had been slid.

I achieved a sitting posture and wiped my mouth on the back of my sleeve. I spat several times, trying to cleanse my mouth, but only diluted the acidic taste. I let my head rest back against the wall and closed my eyes for a moment. So *this is what it's like to be a deboned chicken.*

As much danger as I had faced in my time with Raven, this had to be the absolute worst. The alcohol had worked wonders with my think-box, though throwing up would help curb further damage. The stunner had reduced my muscles to rubber, but they were coming back. That left me in a dark box while, somewhere out there, a woman with a fancy rifle was preparing to turn me into an endangered species. Hell, if she had her way, I'd be extinct.

Under similar circumstances on other occasions, I had at least a few advantages. I had a belt buckle that had a homing device I could activate in an emergency, but it wasn't on the belt I'd bought to go with my suit. I normally had a Kevlar vest, but I'd left that at home. I also normally carried a gun, but I'd figured there was no need for that this evening.

Those are artificial, Longtooth. You do not need them when you have me.

"I need them when someone is shooting at us. For all you've ever done for me, the only thing you're not good at is dodging bullets." I heard him howl in protest, but we each knew the other was right in some ways. His speed and extrasensory abilities would help me a lot if I was going to survive. He wanted me to attack, but his skills would let me do the one thing I wanted to do—run for the Fenris. With his speed, Selene had no chance of keeping up with me.

"Give it to me, Old One. Your speed, your eyes, your ears and your nose."

As you wish, Longtooth, but outside. This place stinks with the fear of others.

That came as no surprise. As the Old One strengthened my body, and I found my muscles responding more or less properly to conscious commands. I wasn't in any condition to perform microsurgery, but walking and chewing gum at the same time weren't beyond me.

With the Old One's eyes I saw the faint outline of a square on the wall away from where the slide entered the room. I crawled over to it and pushed it open. It locked up in place and revealed a three-meter drop to an alley. *Great—get outside, get my bearings and go for the Fenris.*

I went out through the hole feet first and dropped into a crouch as I hit the ground. The cool night air helped clear my head. I loosened my tie and undid the top button of my shirt so I could breathe easier. The Old One's olfactory prowess kicked in, which made me feel better. I turned my back to the wind and saw the lights on top of the RJR Nabisco-Sears tower.

I knew where I was.

So did Selene.

The bullet nailed me in the chest about 10 centimeters below my left nipple. It spun me around, smacking me against the club wall, then tumbling me into a pair of overflowing garbage cans. I landed on my left side, doubling the grinding agony I felt in my ribs. I heard a hissing sound and felt like something inside my lungs was doing everything it could to claw its way out.

Scrambling to my feet, I sprinted down the alley and ducked out onto the street. I headed away from the Fenris for a block before I realized what I was doing. At that point, I ducked into another alley and kept a dumpster downwind.

I reached around back and determined that the bullet had not exited my chest. I pulled off my tie, fighting the pain that came with each breath, and looped it around my chest. Reaching into my back pocket, I dug out my wallet and tore out of it one of the playing card-sized plastic sleeves that protect holograms. This one just happened to be filled with a 'graph of Lynn. I smiled, slipped it inside my shirt and pressed it over the hole in my chest. I tightened the tie to hold it in place, and the hissing sound stopped.

That turned out to be fortunate, because it allowed me to hear the distant sound of an animal loping after me. Cybercur! Imagining a beast that could carry an armored car off in its augmented jaws, I panicked. Adrenaline coursed through me, and my heart pounded like the pistons in an over-revving engine.

The Old One took over with a calm rationality that mocked my fear. He instantly assessed the situation and knew that I could not fight. I could barely run. He knew the shredded and collapsed lung in my chest would not help me and that if I sought to evade the creature tracking me, my wound would kill me.

For once, we agreed, and he sent me out into the night. I remember leaving that second alley and vaulting a speeding Acura Toro. I landed on both feet in the middle of the street, took a half step back to avoid the leading bumper on a Mercedes 920 XL, then spun around and hopped on the running board of a Pierce Arrow Landau reconstruction.

After a block of free ride, the Arrow's driver started going for an Uzi, but the Old One snarled at him. He kept his hands on the wheel and his eyes on the road for another block, then we dropped off and sprinted down an alley. Out on the far street, I cut toward the RJR Nabisco-Sears tower and into the alley that hid my Fenris.

The Old One headed me straight for it, but I re-exerted control and stopped. I pulled the remote control from my pocket and disarmed the anti-theft device. Smiling, I took one step forward, then staggered and leaned heavily against the car as pain lanced from the wound through my chest. The world began to go dark at the edges.

Keep a clear head!

I can master this beast, Longtooth. I have watched you do it enough, the Old One offered.

No chance. The Old One considers vehicular manslaughter a recreational activity. *Just rest for a second, then I'll...*

I heard a growl, and it took me a second to realize it wasn't from the Old One. I looked over and saw a huge animal at the mouth of the alley. The glow of streetlamps traced the silvery claws mounted to the tops of its paws. Twin pistons hissed as the monster opened

its jaw. I saw that its teeth had been replaced top and bottom with a razor-steel strip that included spikes where its canine teeth would have gone. Where its eyes should be I saw two red starbursts that went nova as it looked at me.

Slowly, I turned around and worked my way back around the edge of the Fenris. Looking at the chromed dog over the top of the car, I wished I drove a vehicle big enough to wall off the alley. *No, I had to go for fast and flashy. Val always said this car would get me killed.*

The dog lowered its head and sniffed the ground. It took a step forward, and the black fur on its spine came up. A shiver rippled through its muscles and shook it right down to its stubby tail.

The Old One growled a challenge, and I couldn't stop him. I voiced the howl, and the dog's head came up. I hoped, for a second, that *canis chromus* would run off, but it didn't.

It can smell death on you, Longtooth. I am sorry.

The dog loped forward then and came straight for me.

I pushed myself back off the Fenris and hit the remote control. As the hound from USX leaped over the nose and landed on the roof, four chirps sounded. Before their echoes died, I hit the ground on my back, and the Fenris' defense system kicked into overdrive.

I saw the dog in silhouette for a second before all the fur remaining on it spontaneously combusted. It flashed over, blackening the chrome as the putrid gray cloud drifted up. Then I noticed the red dots in the eyes had dilated to different sizes as the dog's muscles convulsed and tucked the beast into circle. Spraying battery juice and chips against the alley wall, the left side of its head suddenly exploded outward, spinning the cybermutt around and toppling it off by the passenger side of the car.

I lay back for a moment as a cough punched pain through my chest. Once again hitting the remote control, I disarmed the Fenris and crawled toward it. I reached up for a door handle, but the trim burned me. I sunk my right hand into the sleeve of my jacket and tried again, successfully prying the door open.

I started to pull myself into the Fenris and was far enough gone that I didn't even consider what I was doing to the interior. I did know I couldn't drive, but the carphone would let me call Raven or Val or Stealth and get me some help. Bracing myself with my left arm against the floor, I straightened my legs and grabbed for the carphone.

Selene's kick to the back of my knees dropped me to the ground. I twisted around and sat half-upright against the car. I hugged my left arm against the aching hole in my chest and looked up at her. I tried to say something smart, but a cough cut in line and hijacked my throat.

"You did well, Mr. Kies. You should have died long before this." She looked over the hood toward the steaming mound of dogflesh and metal over by the alley wall. "And you cost me Cerberus. That was not nice."

I half-smiled despite the rifle tucked under her arm. "You know, this means I probably won't go to dinner with you again."

"That was a consideration, you know." She smiled, and I remembered why I had chosen to have dinner with her in the first place. "Had you been anyone else, had you not had a history for being annoying, I might not have decided to hunt you." She licked her lips. "Pursue, yes, but not hunt."

My vision began to tunnel slowly. "LoneStar has a file on your activities, you know."

"No it doesn't, Mr. Kies. One of our board members is a major LoneStar stockholder." Her rifle swung into line with my heart. I didn't care what Stealth thought—it didn't look much like a toy from my vantage point. "The game is over."

Selene crouched down and brushed hair away from my forehead. She dug her left hand into her jacket pocket, then brought out something from which I saw a flash of silver. Her hand returned to my head, and I heard a click. Through the shadows, I saw her hand retreat with a lock of my hair. "You make me glad I did not get my bloodlock from Albion."

My carphone started to ring. "Mind if I get that?"
"Go ahead, if you can," she said as the world went dark. "Even if help were on the way, you'd be dead before they found you."
The sound of another bullet being jacked into the chamber of her rifle was the last thing I heard.

V

I discovered, upon waking, that reincarnation had to be true. I felt like a retread.
Fearing the worst, I opened my eyes and found myself lying in the bed I used at Raven's headquarters. I tried to take a normal breath but found something tight constricting my chest. Lifting the blankets, I saw bandages wrapped around me. I also noticed an oxygen tube beneath my nose and a plasma bag running fluid in through the needle stuck in my right arm.

"It was clean, Wolf."
I dropped the blankets and saw Raven standing in the doorway. He's taller than me, and broader, but not in a steroid mutant kind of way. He just looks tall and muscular, an Amerindian Hercules from the tips of his toes to the top of his head. He has the copper skin, long black hair and high cheekbones to make the image stick, too.

In fact, only two things ruin it. The tips of his Elven ears stick up through his hair, which is the only clue he's an Elf. A Native American Elf is decidedly rare, and Raven is rare among them. His eyes bear that out. They always manage to look straight through me. They're dark, like chips of obsidian, but they have these funny lights in them. The best way to describe it is that he's got a bit of the Aurora Borealis trapped there. The lights are blue and red, and I like to think they flash in time with Raven's thoughts, which means they're always moving very fast.

I nodded and gave him a smile. "Did you do your stuff to my ribs?"
He folded his arms across his chest and leaned against the door jamb. "I would not have used magick, but the bullet pulverized approximately 12 centimeters of rib and microperforated your lung. You were in shock and were not stable, so I decided not to crack your chest. I was left no choice. I used magick to reinflate your lung and knit the bone shards back together. The IV is to get fluids back into you." Color rioted through Raven's dark eyes. "Your natural healing process is fast. You should feel better in a couple of days."

Raven is the only other living person who knows about the Old One, and the reference to my natural healing process told me the Old One had been at work. *I will have you healthy soon, Longtooth. I did not need his help.*

I threw the blankets off, then pulled the sheet around me and sat up. The room swam, but I steadied myself against the footboard before I could collapse. "I have to get up, Doc. I know who killed Albion. I know why. Can't wait—more people will die."

I felt his hands on my shoulders. "Valerie traced your location after your Fenris sent a call out to inform us about the attempted theft. While I tried to call you, she learned you were dining with Selene Reece. The club tried to erase the record of your dinner, but she caught it. Reece has dropped off the edge of the earth. She will lay low. We have time to get you healthy."

I shook my head. "No, it's not just her. It's all of them. They have been taking turns." I looked up into his eyes. "They own a chunk of LoneStar. I need your help."

I swear Raven looked back through my eyes and reached some sort of communion with the Old One. I felt the Wolf Spirit's vitality surge through me. He took my right arm and eased the needle from my arm. "Whatever you need, my friend."

"Good. First clothes, then backup." I smiled as I heard the Old One howl in my mind. "Then it's our turn to hunt."

Raven put the call out for help. Tark and Stealth didn't answer, but Tom Electric and Zig and Zag did. Sporting some body armor and my MP-9, I felt the lot of us could have taken on the world and gone the distance.

Tom ended up driving Raven's Rolls, with Iron Mike Morrissey in the navigator's seat. His partner, Tiger Jackson, rode in the back with Raven and me, starting sullen and getting more so every time I referred to his partner and him as Zig and Zag instead of by name.

Raven agreed to the plan I laid out as we rode through the night. "I concur, Wolf. Mr. Jackson and Mr. Morrissey will hold the top of the stairs while Tom secures the front door. You and I will deal with the club's board of directors." Doc nodded solemnly as I jacked a round into the MP-9's chamber. "And I will let you do the talking."

"Good." I looked at the big black Gillette across from me. "Any questions?"

Zag nodded. "This hunting club has lots of wheels. If things get ballistic, are we clear to spray-up the place?"

I was set to nod yes, but Raven shook his head. "I hope we do not have to end up shooting. As Wolf has aptly pointed out, we only have confirmation of one member actually murdering anyone. We need to let the directors know that their new prey is never in season here in Seattle." He looked at me. "Right, Wolf?"

I frowned, which brought a smile to Zag's face, then nodded. I agreed only because wanton murder wasn't really my style. I'd shoot Selene without a second thought, but I didn't know who else in the club had been cap-bustin' on society's ciphers. Purging their membership would only bring heat down on us, and it wouldn't hurt them at all. What would hurt, and what Valerie was doing from her haunt in the Matrix, was deducting a healthy "consulting fee" from their club account—including the cost of burning and burying my suit.

Tom double-parked us and Iron Mike covered the doorman. I winked at him as I went by. Wearing a black leather jacket, jeans and combat boots, I wasn't really dressed for the club. The MP-9 was stylish, which is why I gave the maitre'd a good look at it. "I'm here to see the board. Are they still here?"

He nodded and opened his mouth to speak, but no words came out. I eased the gun-muzzle's pressure on his bow tie, and he swallowed to make sure his throat still worked. "You can't go in there. They are in executive session."

"Not!" I barked at him. I stepped past, and he tried to grab me. I heard a thump, then a sigh. I glanced back at Tiger and saw him tuck away a sap, then headed up the stairs. Tom Electric sat himself on the maitre'd's stool and pinned the man to the ground with an AKM.

Zig and Zag took up positions at the top of the stairs while I led Raven deeper into the building. With a kick, I splintered the lock on the boardroom door and boldly strode into the center of the room. I did remember the trap door and, with the hall light spilling into the room, I avoided its outline. All around me I saw hunched silhouettes leaning forward.

"Sorry to interrupt, brothers and sisters. I never got to thank you for your hospitality before." I sketched a careful bow, ending it abruptly when my rib began to ache. "When I was invited to dinner, I hardly expected to become the center of attention."

The grandmaster's snarling lion kill became illuminated as he spoke. "What do you want, Mr. Kies?"

"I'm wondering how I get a bloodlock off a chrome-dome like you." I arched an eyebrow at him. "If I off you, do I get a chair on your board and have your ugly mug perched behind me?"

Brother Bear took offense at my tone. "You have no right to be here. Leave at once."

I swung the MP-9 in his direction. The single shot I let off passed just over his head, between the wings of his chair, and exploded the bear's head. "Damn, shooting high. That happens after you've had a hole blown in your chest."

"Your attempt at humor is not amusing, Mr. Kies." The grandmaster sat back in his chair. "I can understand your anger. Will ¥50,000 show you that we are sorry?"

"¥50K is a nice sum for the first installment, but I'll give you a break." I shrugged easily. "One time deal—you give me the money and you stop the hunts."

"Policies of this club are not your concern." The grandmaster leaned forward. "If you are threatening us with war, you will find yourself on the losing side."

Raven came up on my right. "Will we?"

The grandmaster nodded slowly, and the other silhouettes aped him in silence. "We have the weapons and the money and the power to destroy you. You are nothing. No one will notice if you die. We offer to enrich you and give you your life. Do not press your luck."

"Luck is not part of this equation." Raven shook his head resolutely. He kept his voice low, but it still filled the room. "You are huntsmen and pride yourselves on having mastered the most dangerous creatures on the planet. You study your quarry. You track it, and you take it." Raven's eyes pulsed with fire. "This time, though, you have been stupid, and all the material things you have will not afford you victory."

"Is that so?"

"It is. You hunt the SINless because they are insignificant. Within the shadows of this city, life is cheap, and you know it. You think this makes you invincible because no one cares about your prey." Doc's eyes sharpened. "You would get more of a fight to protect the rights of rats to live in a tenement than you would to defend the lives of people like Albion."

"You make my case for me." The grandmaster's head came up. "Those people are nothing. They mean nothing. We know it. Those ignoble beasts know it. Their lives are worthless."

I saw where Raven was headed, and his nod let me pick up the fight. "You're right—their lives are worthless. That means we can hand a gun and ¥50 to any of them along with your picture. See, the only thing you don't have going for you is numbers. There are more of them than there are of you, and even if your security is good enough to pick up 60 or 70% of their attacks, you'll still be maggot-munchies."

I let out a chuckle. "And, hey, when they learn you're going to be hunting them anyway, we won't even have to pay them. If we offer a prize, they'll pay us for a ticket in the martial lottery."

The image of a bazooka-toting biped Bambi battalion shooting back at them did not thrill the membership in the least. "Doc, do you think we can get an all-night printer to start turning out hunting permits on our way back cross town?"

"We can use the phone in the Rolls to start things going."

The grandmaster sat back. "If these hunts that you allege are occurring—but which we have never admitted are taken place—were to stop...."

"And a schedule of reparation payments were made to the survivors of these hunt victims," Raven added.

"Quite. If this were to take place, then you would see no reason to take action?"

"A list of persons and amounts to be paid can be in your computer by tomorrow. If you agree to meet it," Raven nodded, "I would consider the matter closed."

"Done."

Raven looked over at me. "Is that satisfactory to you, Wolf?"

"Cept for one thing, yeah, very satisfactory." I looked up at the grandmaster. "When you next see Sister Snake, tell her we still have a date." I jiggled the MP-9. "Tell her it's flak-vest optional."

As we wandered back down the hallway and picked up Zig and Zag at the top of the stairs, I tried to figure out how I'd find Selene Reece. With her money and the connections the club afforded her, she could literally be hiding anywhere in the world. Because of my appearance at the club, she'd know I was still alive, and she would dig her hidey-hole a little deeper.

And if that didn't make things tough enough, she'd know I was after her. Given her skills as a hunter, I had no doubt I'd be facing the most dangerous prey. Oddly enough, that did not concern me as much as I thought it would. The very fact that I could make a run at her meant she wasn't infallible.

Stepping into a warm rain as we left the club, I turned to Raven. "I won't

make the mistake she did. When I do her, I'll make sure she's dead."

"I am certain that is what she intended to do with you, Wolf." Raven nodded at the shadows near the Rolls. "I don't believe she got that chance."

Stealth opened the Rolls' boot and shoved a rifle-case into it. He slammed the lid down with his flesh-and-blood hand, then stepped up onto the sidewalk. He said nothing, a flesh and chrome monument.

"Selene Reece is dead?"

The Murder Machine nodded once. "I heard rumors of a club that hunted people for sport. I decided discovering it needed to be more than a project of leisure."

I shivered at his cold, mechanical delivery. "You learned I was going to the club last night. You found me in time to kill Selene."

"300 meters, .600 Nitro-express, night scope, no rest."

Zag shivered. "Impressive shot."

I swallowed hard. "Thanks for the freebie."

"Amateurs kill for free." He popped open a compartment on his metallic left arm and tossed me a blue silk sachet tied with a lock of black hair. "I am a professional."

Through the silk I felt the coins making up change from the ¥10 bill I'd given him two nights before. From the second he had seen Albion's body, he knew what would happen. That was why he insisted I give him the money and why I'd had a guardian angel following me, waiting....

I looked up at him. "Was I your bait?"

"You were my patron."

I nodded, ignoring the growing ache in my ribs. Slipping the knot from the silk, I poured the money into my pocket. I offered Stealth back his trophy, but he shook his head. I tossed Selene's hair into the gutter. As the rain washed it toward the sewer, I realized that no matter how much of a predator you figure yourself to be, you can always be someone else's fair game. Ω

See the first part of "Fair Game" in **Challenge 62**. And if you like Michael Stackpole's work, you'll love his **Dark Conspiracy** novels, **A Gathering Evil** and **Evil Ascending**, published by GDW.

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Tiger

Now there's a new threat in the city—a new tiger in the urban jungle.

This adventure takes place in New York City and is intended for a group of Experienced PCs. If the PCs are media characters, they are assigned to cover the story of a series of bizarre murders. If the PCs are police, they are sent to deal with the situation. Corporate characters may seek to find out what is going on and perhaps to discredit Adrek—or acquire the bio-weapon for their own studies. Fixers, rockerboys and netrunners may be brought in by others or may blunder into the situation. Solos may be hired to destroy the menace, recapture it for Adrek or capture it for another corporation.

New York City is in far worse shape in 2020 than it was in the 1990s. Some areas are corporate zones—crystal and steel buildings, domed parks, elite corporate security. Other areas are war zones—worn-down buildings, burned-out cars and roving gangs. Most noticeable is the oppressive urban environment, and the sharp contrast between the haves and the have-nots.

INVESTIGATION

The tiger kills one person every day or two, depending on how active it is. As general guidelines, the tiger selects victims who are alone, accessible, not obviously ill and not obviously armed. It tends to attack its victims in their homes, at night.

One way to learn more about the tiger is to access the police computer. The files are open to the police, and the media may be allowed access to some of the information. Of course, the acquisition of a police report would be a good job for a netrunner. Adrek will also be making a run against the police computer—it doesn't want the police comparing codes in the tiger's DNA with what might be found in an Adrek lab. Police computer security is fairly stiff, but will contain no black programs (after all, they are illegal).

Another way to track the tiger is to investigate the scene of one of the killings. Crime scenes are legally accessible to police and (to some extent) the media. If the PCs have access to infrared tracking equipment or pheromone trackers, they can follow the tiger's signature. Tried and true methods of investigation can also be used (questioning

witnesses, looking for traces of the tiger's lair that might be left at the scene of the crime, etc.).

If the PCs are allowed to visit the scene of a crime, they find a lot of blood, a broken lock and a mutilated victim. If the PCs investigate a crime scene illegally, they find police markers, lots of blood and a broken lock. Typically, a police electric eye, motion sensor or sound monitor is present at the scene. The exact nature of the device and the difficulty in detecting and neutralizing it are left up to the referee.

Police

Since the tiger has not killed anyone important, the police have only assigned one cyberpsycho officer to the case. If the PCs are police, they can also be assigned, perhaps after the tiger wastes someone important enough to increase the case's budget.

Police characters have access to the following information: Due to the marked similarities in cases 2789-2798, it is believed that they are the work of a single individual. The relevant similarities are as follows: The wound patterns are all similar and appear to have been inflicted by the same weapon. (Forensics speculates that the weapon is an organic compound ripper.) The victims were all mutilated in the same manner. None of the victims' possessions were taken. Speculation that the killings are assassinations has proved groundless. There are no evident connections between the victims. Testing of skin and hair samples found on the "scratchers" of one victim indicates that the material is bio-engineered. The lab report indicates that the material does not match any known types, and may be unique or at least rare, making identification considerably easier.

Media

Unless the tiger wastes someone important, coverage of the killings is limited to the rear pages and small news blurbs. If news gets out that the killer is an artificial life form, media coverage will increase. There are media teams aplenty in NYC, and their equipment varies from AVs and cybercams to people on foot with notepads.

The media is aware of the following: Ac-

cording to police sources, the bizarre killings appear to be the work of a bio-engineered serial killer. Due to the nature of the mutilations, this killer has become known as the "tiger." The fact that there has been no apparent motivation in the attacks (nothing was stolen, and the victims seem to be unconnected) indicates that the killer is a psychopath or sociopath who kills solely for the sake of killing.

Adrek

Adrek has had a series of public relation nightmares over the past few years and wishes to avoid another one. It is sending a single agent to deal with the tiger. This agent is also an artificial life form, but more stable than the tiger, and it does not need to eat humans. It is aware that it has been wired 12 ways from Tuesday with nasties to ensure its good behavior. Its goal is to recapture or kill the tiger.

If any of the PCs are Adrek personnel (and if they are "in the know"), they are aware that the tiger escaped from an NYC laboratory and that it is probably responsible for the killings. (Two days prior to the first murder, the bio-weapon escaped from an Adrek research laboratory in New York. It laid low for awhile—until it got hungry. It then began to hunt in the urban jungle in order to gain the sustenance it requires, namely human beings. The police and media are correct that it is not killing for an ulterior motive. It is killing to stay alive.)

Other Corporations

Other corporations would love to see Adrek go through another public relations purgatory. They would also love to get their hands on the tiger for study. If the news leaks that an Adrek product is on the loose again, several well-equipped corporate teams will be on location. The corporations wanting to ensure that Adrek gets dragged over the coals publicly will cooperate with the police (hoping for some good PR). The ones that would like to acquire the artificial life form for themselves will not be so cooperative.

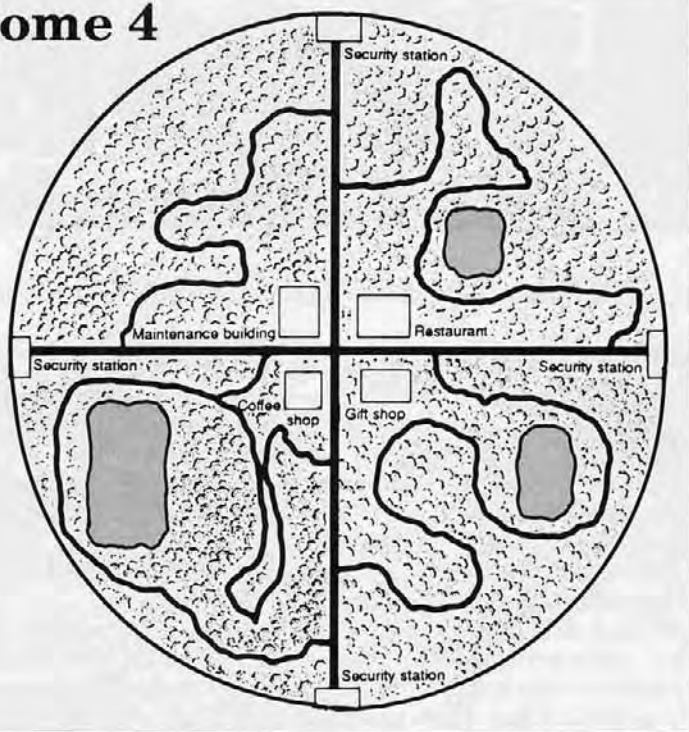
Corporate teams consist of three to five Corporate Muscle solos (special ability level 7), led by a Professional Operator (special

Unfortunately,

I'm the hunter. *By Michael C. LaBossiere*



Parkdome 4



ability level 8). They will be well-equipped with weapons and will have transportation. They are likely to be cyberenhanced.

TRACKING THE TIGER

The first part of the adventure should involve the PCs in attempts to track the tiger and find out what it is. Investigations will range from police work to netrunning data forces. Use the encounter tables for Night City in *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0* to generate random encounters to supplement the investigation. Other possible encounters include meeting up with the other tiger hunters mentioned above. These other hunters may be friendly, neutral or hostile toward the PCs, depending on who they are. For example, police PCs may have a run-in with the Adrek agent and with a team from one of Adrek's rivals.

NPC groups may also encounter the tiger or each other. For example, the tiger may wipe out a media team that surprises it. The PCs will learn about any such encounters through their communication channels or by watching the news.

Eventually, the PCs meet up with the tiger, either by chance or as the result of careful investigation. In whatever manner, they manage to interrupt one of the tiger's meals, allowing the PCs to see what they are facing without having a good opportunity to bag the tiger. A brief melee follows, and the tiger escapes.

FINAL ENCOUNTER

At some point, the tiger leaves a message written in the blood of its latest victim. The crudely written but utterly shocking mes-

sage is this: "Killing is wrong. I'll be at Parkdome 4." The tiger does, in fact, go to Parkdome 4 after this kill and wait in the trees. Amazingly enough, a news team discovers the message before the police, and the report is broadcast, drawing all the surviving hunters to the scene.

Utter chaos prevails at Parkdome 4. The police try to evacuate the place and restore order, while hunting the tiger at the same time. Innocent bystanders panic and flee the coming of the tiger, while thrill-seekers come to watch the action. The tiger calmly waits for someone to come and try to kill it.

The tiger ignores the spectators, but attacks anyone who attacks or physically threatens it. The various groups of hunters may find themselves fighting the tiger while also battling one another for the privilege of bringing the tiger down.

Eventually, the tiger is killed. What happens next depends on who gets it. If the police get it, they will analyze the body and eventually trace it to Adrek, and an investigation of Adrek will follow. If a rival corporation gets the tiger, it will take the tiger for research and eventually try to build another. If the PCs bag the tiger, what they do is up to them. Keep in mind that Adrek, the police and the rival corporations may be quite interested. For example, if the PCs burn Adrek, they will be visited by a corporate retribution team at some point.

PARKDOME

With the decay of society and the environment, outside parks have become increasingly dangerous and vile. In response to his trend, some major cities have constructed

parkdomes (with corporate support). These are giant domes that contain a purified atmosphere and a carefully processed park (filtered and treated soil and water). Parkdomes contain a variety of genetically engineered trees (guaranteed to be immune to various new diseases) as well as artificial lakes. Some are even lucky enough to have a few birds, squirrels or chipmunks.

Armed guards are posted at each entrance. These guards collect a fee for the use of the park (\$20 an hour, generally) and keep order. Naturally, there are numerous rules (no littering, no pets, no walking off the trails), and they are strictly enforced.

Entrances: Each entrance consists of a security station which contains monitors linked to the ceiling cameras of the domes. Also present is the ticket counter. There are four armed guards at each entrance.

Lakes: Lakes are artificial, and some have fountains. There are actually fish in these lakes (they are stocked by a corporation).

Maintenance Building: This building contains the pumps, power plants, computers and equipment required to keep the parkdome running. There are generally four or more workers and technicians here at any time.

Restaurant: An outdoor restaurant with exorbitant prices. Expensive, but where else can you eat outside and not have to brush industrial waste off your food?

Coffee Shop: An outdoor beverage shop. Expensive, of course. This area is favored by up-and-coming corporate personnel.

Gift Shop: Contains a variety of ecology- and nature-related items (shirts, sandals, jewelry, bottles of clean water, pictures of birds, etc.). Expensive, of course.

ADREK BIO-OID

Science fiction has abounded with tales of artificial life created for specific purposes. The late 20th century saw the development of tailored microbes and viruses, mostly created in government labs and used as biological weapons. The 21st century saw the continuation of previous trends in research advancement and weapons production.

In 2020, Adrek Corporation succeeded in producing a new type of bio-weapon. Like its predecessors, this weapon was tailored and was not human. Unlike its predecessors, it was the size of a man and more discriminating about what it would kill.

Constructed out of tailored organics and enhanced with cybernetics, the Adrek bio-oid is a highly efficient weapon. It combines the innovative ability and adaptive capability of the organic life form with the strength and efficiency of the machine.

Intelligence: Bio-oid brain structure is nearly identical to human brain structure. Bio-oids are capable of advanced thought and language use. The "instinctive" parts of their brains take up a higher percentage of

their brain than in a human, which means they tend to follow automatic responses more often than a human would. In game terms, bio-oids can be run like human NPCs, but they will tend to fall into repetitive actions. Further, their self control is fairly low. For example, in combat, they tend to continue to tear into an opponent who was killed five minutes ago.

Morality: As intelligent creatures, bio-oids are capable of moral judgments. Oddly enough, they seem to have a well-developed set of moral beliefs, many of which contrast sharply with their creators and their creators' plans for them. It is speculated that their moral structures are due to their extensive training and perhaps to their closer proximity to their emotions and instincts.

Bio-Oid Model One

The first successful bio-oid was constructed using a mixture of human, orca and tiger genetic material. Advanced nanotechnology and cybernetic technology were employed in its construction. It was designed as an assassin unit to hunt down and kill individual humans. To provide it with a strong motivation, it required human organic material for its sustenance.

The model was well-equipped for its job. Organic rippers and fangs were built into its structure, and its reflexes and strength were enhanced. The finished product was man-shaped, with extendable claws and a striped hide. And an appetite for human flesh.

Int: 4 **Tech:** 1
Ref: 11 **CL:** 9
Luck: 3 **Att:** 2
Emp: 2 **Bod:** 11
MA: 9

Skills: Combat Sense +8, Hide/Evade +6, Language (English) +2, Shadow/Track +7, Wilderness Survival +6, Athletics +7, Dodge & Escape +7, Melee +7, Karate +6.

Hardware: Pain Editor, Neural Processor, Kerenzikov Boosterware (+2), Skin Weave, Muscle & Bone Lace, Enhanced Antibodies, Toxin Binders, Nanosurgeons, rippers and implanted fangs.

Special: Eyes equivalent to low-lite cyberotics.

BM1 is in the process of developing a moral sense. The first development comes when it realizes that it is wrong for Adrek to keep it prisoner, so it escapes. Later, it begins to feel remorse about its killings. Unfortunately, it cannot survive without human flesh, and it was programmed to kill—a program which it cannot override. Eventually, it realizes that the only way it can stop is to try to die. Its programming prohibits suicide or even not defending itself when threatened. Thus, it came up with a plan to allow itself to be killed through no real action—or inaction—of its own.

Bio-Oid Model Two

The second bio-oid combined tiger and human generic material with the cyber and nanotechnology. It was designed to serve

as a weapon-bearing soldier.

Adrek learned a valuable lesson from BM1's escape and applied this lesson to BM2. This model was given a greater intellect and does not draw its sustenance from human flesh. It is more human in some ways than the first bio-oid. BM2 has several "loyalty ensurers" built into it and has been informed of this fact. As such, BM2 is careful to obey its owners.

Int: 6 **Tech:** 2
Ref: 10 **CL:** 8
Luck: 2 **Att:** 4
Emp: 1 **Bod:** 9
MA: 8

Skills: Combat Sense +8, Hide/Evade +4, Shadow/Track +4, Wilderness Survival +2, Athletics +6, Handgun +4, Submachinegun +4, Rifle +4, Melee +4, Karate +5.

Hardware: Kerenzikov Boosterware (+2), Neural Processor, Interface Plugs, Muscle & Bone Lace, Skin Weave, Enhanced Antibodies, Toxin Binders, Nanosurgeons, Rippers.

Surprises: Brain Bomb, four neuro-toxin sacks implanted in major organs, three viral bombs implanted in bones, and a heart bomb. (See Challenge 43.)

BM2 looks almost human, and with today's body-sculpting, it can easily walk the streets. It is not particularly fond of Adrek and is not happy to be hunting down BM1.

However, the surprises implanted in its body give Adrek a great deal of control over it. □

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Kubla Khan III, Aug. 7-9 at the Utah State Fairpark, Salt Lake City, UT. Write to Comics Utah, 258 E. 100 S., Salt Lake City, UT 84111.

San Diego Comic Con, Aug. 13-16. Contact Comic Con, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458.

Origins/GEN CON, Aug. 20-23, at MECCA in downtown Milwaukee, WI. For more information or to receive a copy of the pre-registration brochure, write to Origins/GEN CON Game Fair, PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

DrakCon '92, Aug. 22-23 at the College Dining Room, Northern College of Education, Hilton Drive, Aberdeen, Scotland. Contact DrakCon '92, 5 Cottage Brae, Nelfield Place, Aberdeen, Scotland AB1 6DG.

Tacticon '92, Aug. 28-30 at the Holiday Inn Convention and Trade Center at I-70 and Chambers Road. Contact the Denver Gamers Assn., PO Box 440058, Aurora, CO 80044.

Con-Spiracy, Aug. 28-30 at the Omni Durham Hotel & Convention Center, 201 Foster St., Durham, NC. For more information, contact Con-Spiracy, c/o NAARP, PO Box 2752, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2752.

MagiCon, Sept. 3-7 at Orange County Civic & Convention Center, Orlando, FL. Write to MagiCon, Box 621992, Orlando, FL 32862-1992.

Gateway 12, Sept. 4-7 at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Contact Strategicon, PO Box 3849, Torrance, CA 90510-3849.

Texi-Con '92, Sept. 4-7 in Houston, TX. Contact Greater Houston Gaming, Ltd., PO Box 631462, Houston, TX 77263-1462.

Emperor's Birthday Convention, Sept. 5-6 at the Century Center, 120 South Saint Joseph St., South Bend, IN 46601.

Fantasy Fest Fall '92, Sept. 5-7 in Sunbury, PA. For details, contact A&B Entertainment, PO Box 645, Shamokin Dam, PA 17876.

Operation Green Flag: BattleTech, Sept. 12-13 at the Embers in Carlisle, PA. Contact M. Fonier's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland, PA 17070.

Miraclecon '92.2, September 19 at the Liedertafel Club, S. Burnett Road, Springfield, OH. Write to Wolf's Lair Games, 601 W. Leefels Lane, Suite P, Springfield, OH 45506.

22nd Emperor's Birthday Game, Sept. 19-20 at the Century Center in downtown South Bend, IN, across from the Marriott Hotel. Contact Mark Schumaker, PO Box 252, Elkhart, IN 46515.

Oklonomicon Games Show and Convention, Sept. 25-27. Write to Oklanomicon, c/o John Hunter, PO Box 7743, Moore, OK 73159.

Phantasm '92, Oct. 3-4 at the Peterborough Public Library, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. For details, write to Phantasm '92, 276 Parkhill Road West (rear), Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9H3H5.

RoVaCon SF, Oct. 2-4. Send a SASE to RoVaCon, PO Box 117, Salem, VA 24153.

Quad Con '92, Oct. 9-11 at Palmer Auditorium, 1000 Brady St., Davenport, IA. Send a large SASE with two stamps to Quad Con '92, The Game Emporium, 3213-23rd Ave., Moline, IL 61265.

NerdCon II, Oct. 16-18 at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Contact Randi Walwick, 7 Livingston Dr., Peabody, MA 01960.

Not Just Another Con, Oct. 16-18 at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Contact Science Fiction Conventioneers of UMass (SCUM), RSO 16, Campus Center, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003.

NOVAG VII, Oct. 16-18 at the West Park Hotel in Leesburg, VA, less than an hour's drive from Washington, D.C. Contact NOVAG, c/o Ralph Allen, PO Box 122, Sterling, VA 22170.

Tacticon '92, Oct. 17-18, sponsored by the Gaming Guild of Connecticut.

Octacon '92, Oct. 23-25 at the Alaskanland Civic Center. For details, contact Octacon '92, PO Box 85105, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708.

World Fantasy Convention, Oct. 29-Nov. 1 at Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, GA. Send SASE to World Fantasy Convention '92, Box 148, Clarkston, GA 30021.

Con of the Weird and Supernatural (COWS '92), Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at the Embers in Carlisle, PA. Contact M. Fonier's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland, PA 17070.

NovaCon, Nov. 6-8 at the Halifax Holiday Inn in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Contact NovaCon Society, PO Box 1282 Main, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada B2Y 4B9.

ShaunCon V, Nov. 6-8 at the Roadway Inn, Sixth and Main, Kansas City, MO. Write to the Role-Players Guild of Kansas City, c/o ShaunCon V, PO Box 7457, Kansas City, Mo 64116.

Command.Con.4, Nov. 7 at the cafeteria of St. Louis Community College at Forest Park, 5600 Oakland, St. Louis, MO. Write to Command.Con.4, PO Box 9107, St. Louis, MO 63117.

Lagacon 15, Nov. 7-8, at the Fraternal Order of Eagles, 116 N. 8th St., Lebanon, PA. Contact the Lebanon Area Gamers Association, 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon, PA 17042.

Sci-Con 14, Nov. 13-15 at the Holiday Inn Executive Center, Virginia Beach, VA. Send a SASE to Sci-Con 14, PO Box 9434, Hampton, VA 23670.

Pentacon VIII, Nov. 14-15 at Grand Wayne Center in downtown Fort Wayne, IN. Contact Steve and Linda Smith, 836 Himes, Huntington, IN 46750.

Announcements cannot be included unless sent in a minimum of four months in advance. Challenge is not responsible for errors in convention announcements. Write to Challenge Conventions, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.

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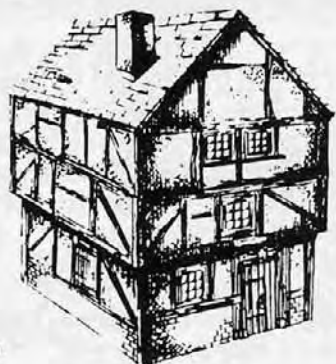
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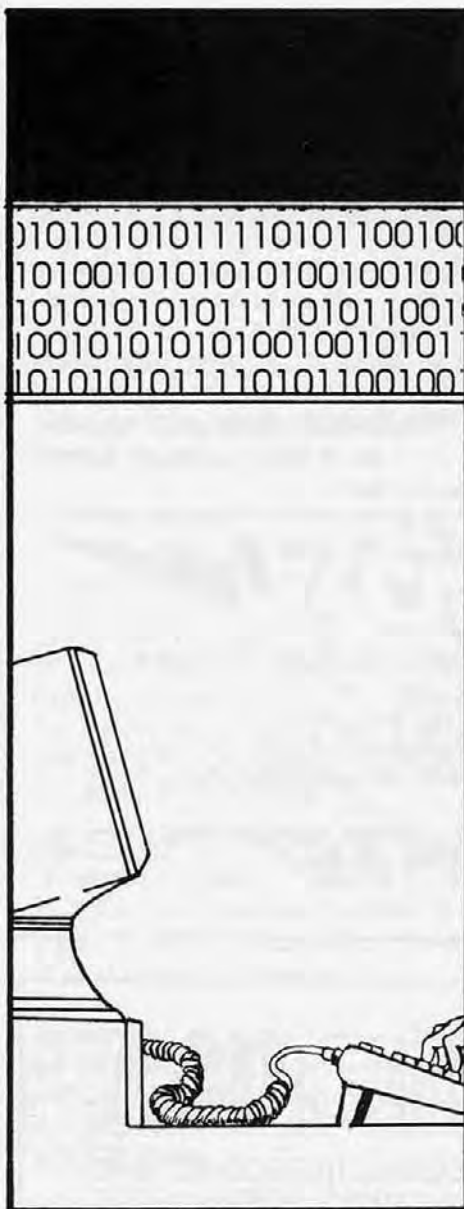


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COMPUTER BBS GAMING

By Mitch Lavender

Computers have become a fixture in many homes over the past few years, mostly due to their diversity in function. And games. Computers are practical and educational, and they are more affordable now than ever before. And you can play games on them. The software on the market is professional and well designed. Did I mention that a wide variety of games are available?

A special dimension to using your computer is BBS gaming. Through a computer modem, a user can call a Bulletin Board System (BBS) via an ordinary phone line. Once connected, the user can quickly and easily transfer data back and forth between his computer and the BBS. Early BBSs were

limited and only allowed the user to leave or read messages, hence the name bulletin board. But as BBS programs grew more sophisticated, they allowed for sending private e-mail, multiple message bases, file transfers and on-line gaming.

DID YOU SAY GAMING?

On-Line Games: An on-line game allows a user to play a game on his computer and, in most cases, save his status after he quit so he can return to exactly the same spot in the game at a future time. This allows players to compete against one another over a period of weeks or even months, each player limited by a time allowance or number of moves each day until one of the players achieves a set goal. The variety of on-line games available for BBSs range from stan-

dard games such as *Yahtzee* or even *Scrabble* to *Operation Overkill II* (a post-holocaust RPG) or *Trade Wars 2001* (a space trading game).

If all this sounds like play-by-mail gaming to you, you're not far off. It is much like PBM, but lacking the lengthy turnaround time and, in most cases, the cost. For most BBS on-line games, you can take your turn every day if you wish.

RPGs: Some BBSs have referees who run various RPGs in a message base set up solely for the games. The referee posts a message with the turn results, and the players then post what their characters' responses will be.

For BBS RPGs, turnaround time is slower than with on-line games, but is still more rapid than PBM. Usually a healthy BBS RPG

kicks along at one turn per week, or in some cases one turn every four or five days.

Networks: Several networks are also devoted to gaming. A network is a series of BBSs that contact each other regularly and exchange data in the form of messages or files. These BBSs form a network, gathering data from each other, adding their own and passing it on to the next. Some of these networks are quite expansive, literally worldwide, and consist of literally thousands of BBSs. During the Persian Gulf War for example, a network called Saudi-Net was set up to mediate messages with the troops posted overseas. (A nice idea, but I wonder how many phone lines were available in the desert, to say nothing of computers.)

Networks devoted to gaming transmit turns for several RPGs, provide a forum for discussion of particular games, and just allow users to talk about games in general with others all over the United States or the world.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Assuming you have a computer and a modem, getting involved in computer BBSing is easy. Most any telecommunications program will fit the bill, but I recommend that you use one that supports ANSI graphics. Some of the on-line games require ANSI support for the user to play them, and it just makes the BBS more colorful overall.

If you live in a large- or medium-sized city, you will have dozens, perhaps even hundreds of BBSs to choose from. For example,

in Fort Worth, Texas, there are over 100 BBSs on a formal BBS listing, with at least that many again that are not on the list, and then another 25 in Dallas that have Metro lines and are not considered long distance to call. Smaller towns have fewer to choose from, but most have at least one BBS.

A computer user's group can help you get in touch with local BBSs, and even a nearby computer store might be able to give you the numbers to a few. Once you get on one BBS, you will likely discover the numbers to a plethora of others. Most BBSs have a listing of "Other Fine BBSs" display automatically when you log off, or offer a listing available for viewing from one of the menus.

The sysop (system operator) of the BBS you contact will probably support gaming. If he doesn't, log off and try another, or leave the sysop a message requesting that he add gaming to his BBS's features. Most sysops listen to their users, especially the ones who call regularly and participate in the activities and conversations on the board. They are hobbyists too, and in almost all cases they are running their BBS as a diversion. A few charge a fee to join, but these usually have something significant to offer that other BBSs lack, such as multi-line chat between users (i.e., more than one user can be logged onto the BBS at once, and these users can type to each other in real time, rather than leaving messages).

When you log on to a BBS, you usually have to fill out a questionnaire. This is stan-

dard stuff—name, phone number, and sometimes age and address. Then you will be required to read a list of house rules, with things not allowed on the board, such as profanity, etc. Then you will get into a limited menu that might let you do some of the low-level functions of the board, such as list the other users who call. It usually takes about 24 hours for the sysop to upgrade your security to a level that allows you to use the more advanced features of the BBS, and it's a good idea to leave the sysop a message just saying, "hi," and requesting access so he knows you are there.

A final consideration when calling a BBS for the first time—a notice on the log-on screen will usually indicate whether "handles" are acceptable. If they are, you can use a pseudonym on the BBS rather than your actual name.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS

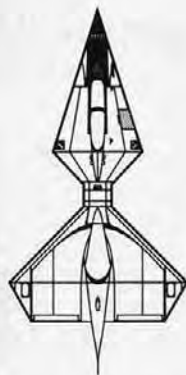
If you can't locate a BBS in your area, or if you live in a secluded area where none are available, you still have some options. You can call a BBS in another area code. This will be long distance, but if you call after prime calling hours, the rates drop considerably. Or you can join one of the large telecommunication services which charge a fee. Ω

This article is the first in a three-part series by Mitch Lavender on computer gaming. For additional information, don't miss future issues of Challenge.

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JANET AVULSIO 1992

From the TRENCHES

By Adam Geibel

Nightmares, both real and imaginary, are a given byproduct of warfare since the beginning of recorded time. As man became more efficient at slaughtering himself, his nightmares grew stronger and more numerous. During the Great War, so many torments were born in battle that naming them all was impossible. Most of these terrors died quickly on the battlefields, while many more were later put to rest on psychiatrists' couches.

*From "Treatments on the Front: Healing Unseen Wounds,"
Dr. Fritz Lieberstrauss, Vienna, Austria, 1924.*

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The following adventure offers a choice of openings and outcomes to suit your individual campaign. A copy of *Arkham Unveiled* is recommended.

First Opening: The PCs are contacted by a stranger based on their reputation.

Since our last trip to Miskatonic, a dark cloud seems to follow me. But until today, I thought I had nothing to fear from my mailcarrier. In addition to the bills was a thick letter addressed with the shakiest script. The return address read "Miskatonic Veterans' Home." A man I'd never heard of was begging for help. Said he'd read something about me in the newspaper after that last trip. He thought I could help him fight a horror that had followed him home from the war.

Second Opening: The PCs by chance meet up with an eccentric old man.

We were in Parrington's gun shop to pick up shells for Saturday's goose hunt. Just as we were about to leave, a wizened, bedraggled man entered the store. In a rasp, he asked for a case of .30-06 shells. When Ed slapped a box of 20 down in front of him, he snapped back, "No, man, a case! A case of 1000!" Parrington asked the question we were all thinking. The eccentric smiled back, then answered, "Have any of you ever been in the trenches?"

Third Opening: One of the investigators is a veteran of the Great War, preferably a survivor of the trench-fighting of 1918. He is contacted by an old friend.

I hadn't seen Anderson since the war. He had returned from his last patrol grievously wounded; I thought he had died since then. That is, until I received a short telegraph begging that I come see him at the veterans' home. The Anderson I remembered was tall, athletic and should be around 30. At first, I thought we had the wrong room. A bedraggled old man sat on the edge of his bed, staring out the window, not noticing me until I whispered his rank. My blood ran cold when I saw his sorrowful face. With recognition came a spark of life, and he invited me to sit down. I glanced at my friends, took a corner of the bed and listened to his tale.

Fourth Opening: The PCs are staying in a run-down old home in Arkham. One evening, they apprehend an intruder who tells them that the house formerly belonged to his parents. He claims that "something he needs" is still hidden in the basement. If the PCs allow him to proceed, he reveals a cache of weapons buried in the dirt floor of the basement, under the stairs.

UNDER A DARK SKY

With slow, measured speech and labored breathing, Anderson took more than an hour to spin his tale. It went something like this:

In the last days of the Great War, the trenches were a place of horror. To be out-

side, to ignore the periscopes or look at the sky was to invite a sniper's bullet, the whir of a trench mortar or the attention of a spotter floating in a plane high above one's head. So the men hid under the bunker roofs like so many rodents during the day. At dusk or under the cover of the late fall rains, they would slither out their holes. Negotiating their way from wire crater to gully to collapsed trench, they made their way through no-man's land and into the enemy's backyard. Gaining information rather than ground was the objective, and stealth rather than bravado brought them back alive.

One particular raid would forever haunt the life of the sole survivor. On the last night of October 1918, 15 men of Company A, 2nd Battalion slipped out of their trenches and crept toward German lines. They were heavily armed, and all were veterans of a score of trench brawls. Within the last week, two other from neighboring companies had completely disappeared in front of a section of the Hun's lines thought to be deserted.

A Company's patrol was halfway across no-man's land when the corporal heard something and signaled a halt. Suddenly there was a deafening roar, and several shadows rushed the patrol. At first it seemed that the Germans had discovered them, but the light of a distant artillery flare said otherwise.

The attackers were bigger than men, seemingly naked, very large and very angry. Anderson fired his rifle as fast as he could, reloaded, emptied it again. One beast fell to a volley of grenades, and Branton's Lewis gun downed three more. Then the weapon clicked dry, and they were on the poor kid.

The patrol tried to pull back, but the withdrawal turned into a race, and three more men fell. The rest of the company made it to the safety of a shell crater, hoping to catch their breath in some defensible position. But a half-dozen of the creatures swarmed over the lip of the pit, and in the darkness a close and confusing fight whirled around the shattered hole. Anderson put his rifle against the back of one of the creatures and fired. It registered pain but didn't stop disemboweling the soldier in its grip.

Anderson grabbed two men and fled, half out of his mind. One of the nightmares broke off from the slaughter and gave chase, quickly felling one fellow without even breaking its stride. The other soldier tripped over barbed wire and cried out for help. Pausing, Anderson made eye contact with his lone pursuer for a second, then he ran for his life.

Anderson somehow made it back to his lines, unaware of the wounds to his legs and arms. He tried to tell the first sergeant, the officers, the medics, about the beasts. No one would listen. He went into a panic, and when he woke up, he was in a hospital outside Paris—the war was over. His questions and warnings were met with a stony

assurance that "it would be looked into." But the whispers that followed said much more.

Anderson spent the rest of the year on convalescent leave in Paris. He became paranoid, convinced that something trailed him from the sewers below. He went so far as to buy a few battlefield relics for personal protection and ship more back to his parents' home. And at the beginning of the new year, along with thousands of other soldiers, he returned to America and his native state.

KEVIN ANDERSON

Born October 30, 1899, Anderson was a precocious youth. He graduated with honors from high school a year early and was attending his first year at Miskatonic when the war called. He volunteered for the infantry and was with the first American troops deployed in France in 1917.

Promoted three times on the battlefield, Anderson was adept at surviving the fighting and became something of a local media hero. The future seemed quite promising. But when the war ended, he came home a physically broken and mentally listless man.

Anderson attempted to continue his studies, but the spark was gone. His failing health and shaky mental state was further aggravated when his parents sickened and died (possibly of typhoid) late in 1919.

That was the last straw, and Anderson lost his tenuous grasp on reality. He was treated briefly by a university psychiatrist, but things just never worked out. Anderson became a shriveled caricature of his former self, without appetite, desire or emotion, given to long periods of listlessness.

Two months ago, Anderson caught a glimpse of something horrifying familiar from his window. He had seen the threat, and he knew too much. It was still after him.

Anderson doesn't really believe anyone will be willing to help him. But he is desperate, and he will tell his story to anyone who seems interested. He wants to recover the entire cache of weapons from his parents' home, then go for broke. This time, he says, only he or the monster will walk away.

Attributes: STR 8, CON 6, SIZ 13, INT 14, POW 16, DEX 9, APP 7, EDU 13, SAN 10, HP 7.

Weapons: See Anderson House, below.

Skills: Camouflage 70%, Occult 15%, Drive Auto 45%, Dodge, Hide 45%, Listen 40%, Operate Heavy Machinery 45%, Make Maps 30%, Throw 30%, Track 65%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 80%, Listen 55%, First Aid 40%, Speak German 20%, Handgun Attack 75%, Rifle Attack 80%, Shotgun Attack 75%, Machinegun Attack 35%, Nightstick/Club 55%, Knife 40%.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Is Anderson really facing a battlefield demon or just a figment of his guilt-ridden imagination? The following options are pro-

vided so the referee can pick one to match his campaign situation or roll 1D6 to randomly determine the result.

1: Survivor's Guilt: This is a wild goose chase. The creatures and all subsequent events are residents of a tormented mind. Anderson's last patrol was no less realistic or violent than any other he had participated in. But this time, it was his men rather than the enemy who were surprised and wiped out. "Survivor's guilt" is what the experts call his condition—guilt that turned mere men into monsters. After all, how could an all-American hero survive when his comrades fell to a vicious enemy?

2: Dormant Spirit: The creature is a physical manifestation of Anderson's guilt. A spirit laying dormant in the house now occupied by the veterans' home has been feeding on the depression. Anderson's intense feelings have given it an invitation to come out and play, even giving it a form and a mission to assume.

3: Human Predator: The "creature" is actually a human intent on murdering Anderson. Charlie Gould was the young private who tripped on the barbed wire during that fateful patrol and was subsequently captured by the Germans. He only spent a week in detention, and while he was hungry most of the time, he wasn't really mistreated.

Gould was young and full of high hopes when he went to war. Unfortunately, nothing has gone right since. And failure and disillusionment have caused bitterness and blame, and a misguided conclusion that all his problems are the result of his imprisonment. And Anderson was the one person who could have saved him—and didn't.

Charlie went home to Boston, eventually, and became a small-time hood and semi-competent hit-man for a local gang. Not too long ago, he saw a small article in a Boston paper about an Arkham war veteran who "wiggled out" and shot up a local graveyard (see result 4, below). It took awhile, but Charlie drove all the way up here in his clapped-out Model-T to pay his old army buddy a visit.

Attributes: STR 11, CON 8, SIZ 9, INT 10, POW 10, DEX 6, APP 5, EDU 9, SAN 22, HP 8.

Weapons: Garrote, knife, .32 automatic.

Skills: Jump 25%, Fast Talk 50%, Bargain 35%, Camouflage 70%, Climb 40%, Drive Auto 55%, Electrical Repair 35%, First Aid 40%, Hide 65%, Listen 50%, Operate Heavy Machinery 45%, Rifle Attack 70%, Pistol Attack 50%, Knife 60%, Sneak 60%.

4: Graveyard Ghouls: The creatures from the battlefield are figments of Anderson's imagination. But what he has been seeing lately are ghouls from the Old Wooded Graveyard. Since Anderson spends so much of his life looking out of the window, it was only a matter of time before he caught sight of his unnatural neighbors and swore to strike

back at what he thinks are his old enemies.

Anderson's state wouldn't allow him to leave well enough alone. Sneaking out of the home late one night, he went on patrol again. He actually managed to kill one ghoul with a shotgun retrieved from his house. The police arrived quickly and apprehended him while the ghouls recovered their body.

Now the ghouls know about Anderson and won't leave him alone. At night, they taunt him from high perches, hiding whenever he brings someone to witness their antics. The ghouls may not be too bright, but they know that if they can lure him back, he'll make a fine meal.

5: Gibichung: The creatures are real, the product of German experiments on African apes taken from the Berlin Zoo. Anderson's patrol was one of the last group of victims before the German High Command came to its senses and exterminated most of these things.

Known as Gibichungs, these creatures stand seven feet tall and weigh 300 pounds, with brown-tinted flesh and a mockery of human body hair. Statistics are as follows:

Attributes: STR 35, CON 16, SIZ 22, INT 6, POW 13, DEX 18, SAN 0, HP 25.

Dam Bonus: Bite 1D6+4/2D6+4.

Hand: 1D6+4.

The Germans' intent was to create a superweapon without draining already meager resources—a soldier that could clear a section of battlefield without the need for increasingly complex weapons or burdened with the limitations of fear or pain. However, in the process of initial deployment, the creatures became uncontrollable and were just as likely to turn on friend as foe.

The beast now stalking Anderson is very real. In fact, it is the same creature that met his gaze on that long-ago battlefield. Anderson may have won on that day by escaping with his life, but now the beast is intent on settling the score.

The ocean that separated them after Anderson returned home offered a temporary frustration. But using its elevated instincts and cunning, the creature somehow crossed the Atlantic and continued its hunt to sleepy Arkham.

6: Gibichung Revisited: The Gibichungs were created as explained above. One of the creatures was wounded in battle, captured and subdued by a French Army deserter. After keeping it drugged for a year in an unused wine cellar, the deserter sold it to a travelling carnival, which eventually made its way to America.

As long as the creature was fed a steady diet of drugs, it was fairly docile. However, by a strange twist of fate, the Gibichung escaped the carnival the night after it reached Arkham. Anderson saw the creature roaming past the graveyard, on its way to find a meal. It found the ghouls, which were almost as satisfying. The combination of ghoul flesh

and a lack of its usual medication is restoring the Gibichung's former antisocial tendencies. The Gibichung will continue its spree until it is killed, something attracts it to new hunting grounds, or its owners reclaim and subdue it.

VETERANS' HOME

The Miskatonic Veterans' Home is a dilapidated, three-story, brick building on Boundary Street, across from the Old Wooded Graveyard. A yard of weeds is surrounded by a rustling iron fence. Inside, yellowing paint peels from walls, and steam pipes groan, adding to the aura of depression.

The home is staffed by two nurses, two orderlies and a cook to care for the 25 veterans living there. A disinterested doctor from St. Mary's makes semiregular visits, and there is no staff psychiatrist. The staff members cannot be said to earn their salaries. Recovery is unlikely—this is a human warehouse for those waiting to die.

ANDERSON HOUSE

The Anderson house is a three-story, brick, row home. Oil-heated, it includes three bedrooms and two baths, kitchen, basement and attic. From the outside, it is unassuming and even a bit run-down, but everything inside works, down to the electricity and running water. Brokerage is handled by Manton & Manton Real Estate, and the home rents at \$25 a month or \$200 a year.

What makes the Anderson house unique is the weapons cache buried in the dirt floor of the basement, under the stairs. The prize piece is a pristine .30-06 Lewis gun with three 47-round pans and one 97-round aircraft drum, heavily cosmolined and wrapped separately, as well as a .45 government automatic and three magazines.

FINAL NOTES

There isn't much monetary reward for the investigators in this case. However, played well, this adventure could give the investigators a base of operations in Arkham.

Anderson doesn't have much in the way of worldly possessions other than a \$2500 bank account and his parents' house. If the PCs offer their assistance, Anderson might be inspired to draft and even have notarized a will leaving everything to one of the investigators (50%). This assumes that they're generally nice to him, in addition to believing his story. A successful conclusion will definitely put them in Anderson's will (99%), provided he is alive to write one.

Given enough time, Anderson will be able to function in society. He will be grateful to the PCs for their assistance, opening his home to them and essentially becoming their major domo. However, he will never have the stamina to be an investigator and will refuse to listen to any "ghost stories." Ω

DOOLEY'S doughnuts

By Charles G. Weekes



Gaming often involves contact with new civilizations, solving problems of diplomacy, outwitting Klingons and other enemies of the Federation. Seldom is attention paid to the matters of starship operation. For example, something any military person of today can relate to—the dreaded supply inspection!

SHORE LEAVE BOUND

After three months of constant battle alert on the Klingon Neutral Zone, your starship is in need of repairs, and the crew is looking forward to a month dirtside on shore leave. A few hours away from Starbase 210, the communications officer receives an important message for the captain. If questioned, the communications officer will only confirm that it isn't an invasion alert or disaster call—though everyone may soon wish it was.

The captain eventually breaks the news—five days after your arrival at Starbase 210, your starship will receive a supply inspection by Commodore J. Bertram Dooley of Supply Corp. So far, six ships have failed inspection. All had their rest leaves canceled, and the crews were forced to work extra shifts to straighten out their administrative files.

The captain calls a briefing of department heads to review supply status. All PC and NPC department heads roll on Preparation for Inspection Table. Unless the department heads are extremely lucky, most have their work cut out for them.

Department heads should roll under their Administrative skill combined with their Department Branch skill. (For example, the chief engineer would add Astronautics and Administration). Success means they can reduce their Preparation for Inspection Table score by 5 points after one day. Failure adds 10 points (taking personnel fatigue and Murphy's Law into account).

On the second day in port, some department heads notice shortages of needed items. A number of starships are ready to deploy, and they have priority for materials. If the PCs haven't thought of it yet, an NPC senior enlisted character suggests using the Starbase "network." Maybe in addition to getting the needed supplies, they can get a handle on Commodore Dooley.

A VISIT TO VICK'S

Those who pursue the network need to roll under the average of their Streetwise and Negotiation/Diplomacy skills. Success points them to Quartermaster T. Vick, an enlisted person who resembles a cross between a snake oil salesman, used-car dealer and general wheeler-dealer. Vick never accepts cash—if any Star Fleet officer is fool-

ish enough to offer a monetary bribe more than three times, all discussions end, and any chance for that particular department to pass the inspection vanishes. However, Vick is always on the lookout for exotic items from various planets a starship might visit. A successful roll under an average of Streetwise and Negotiation/Diplomacy gains either material or information. If a PC rolls under one-fourth of his average Streetwise and Negotiation/Diplomacy, he gains both materials and information.

In exchange for a bottle of Saurian brandy, Vick will tell the successful officer the following about Commodore Dooley:

- Dooley is from a family of Star Fleet officers who have distinguished line careers. He is the only staff officer in his family because of problems at Star Fleet Academy. Most think he over-compensates for what he sees as a failing by being the best bean counter in the fleet.

- Dooley is a fanatic for spit and polish "like the good old days!" The shinier the brass and stainless steel, the more minor items he tends to overlook. However:

- Dooley wants every issued item accounted for with proper paperwork for missing material.

- Dooley's one vice is real chocolate butternut doughnuts (not reproduced by replicators), washed down with Irish cream-laced coffee.

At the conclusion of the meeting with Vick, each department head rolls his Administrative/Department Branch skill. If the character was successful with Vick, he gets a -5 to his roll. If a character makes his Administrative/Department Branch roll, subtract 10 points from his Preparation for Inspection Table result. Failure, regardless of the encounter with Vick, adds 15 points to the Preparation for Inspection Table result.

TO THE GALLEY

Word comes in on day three that the inspection has been moved up 24 hours. If the PCs try to contact the ships that failed their inspections, they'll learn that all six are out in the Oort belt, maintaining strict radio silence until Dooley is ready to reinspect them. Any characters who were successful with T. Vick may share their information with other department heads—but be advised, some captains take a dim view of such trickery.

Aboard the PCs' starship is an unsung hero nicknamed Cookie. Cookie is the senior mess specialist—an enlisted person responsible for the dietary health of the crew in coordination with the Medical Department. Cookie and his specialists prepare meals from raw materials to be transported to various mess or lounge locations on a starship or base. Much more than "just cooks," Star Fleet mess specialists are skilled in any special dietary requirements

for the various non-human races serving on starships or bases. Trained in Star Fleet protocols for diplomatic events, they can make the difference between a successful meeting or treaty-disrupting disaster. Oh, and Cookie is known far and wide for his delectable chocolate butternut doughnuts.

Because Cookie never gets much appreciation from officers and crew, a PC approaching him to prepare the chocolate butternut doughnuts must roll against one-half of his Negotiation/Diplomacy skill. Threats will not work on Cookie or his people, and will only make the negotiations that much harder to win. If a PC rolls less than 20% of his Negotiation/Diplomacy skill, Cookie will not only bake the doughnuts but will admit that he was Commodore Dooley's personal chef 10 years ago (and hence was responsible for Dooley's chocolate butternut doughnut fetish). If the PC just makes a saving roll, Cookie makes the doughnuts, but keeps silent about his knowledge of Dooley.

GUESS WHAT WE'RE OUT OF

All department heads should roll for how prepared their people are for the inspection. On a successful roll, subtract 20 points from the Preparation for Inspection Table result. A failure adds 35 points. After the results are in, Cookie calls the PC who dealt with him earlier, demanding to know where all the microwave heater elements are for the coffee makers. Without heaters, he can't make the coffee the way Dooley likes it. PCs may feel free to conduct an unofficial search of the ship, though that will be easier said than done.

The referee should throw every possible obstacle into the searchers' paths. Everyone from enlisted to junior officers are scrubbing, polishing, cataloging and storing, and all are apt to tear off the heads of any senior officers other than the captain or first officer who happen to wander through.

If the characters try to go ashore to pick up the elements, the referee should point out that to requisition the heaters would mean paperwork, and paperwork would lead Dooley to ask what happened to the old heaters.

However, if a deal could be worked out with another starship to borrow the heaters for a few days...

To succeed on their search, the characters should roll Character Luck averaged with Negotiation/Diplomacy and Streetwise. Once the characters have returned with the elements, they will discover that the old elements were removed by someone in Engineering to replace converter units on a phaser coupling. The parts have been returned and are accounted for, and the new elements are also on-board without documentation.

SURPRISE, SURPRISE!

Commodore Dooley decides to stop by early for his inspection.

He's so disgusted with the ships operating out of Starbase 210 that he's salivating at the prospect of flunking seven out of seven starships.

If no one was able to appropriate new heating elements, Dooley will begin his inspection with a random department. If the player characters did manage to get new elements, they arrive on-board at the same time as Dooley, and the player characters have no opportunity to dispose of the incriminating evidence. Worse, the player character carrying the heaters is chosen to escort Dooley through the ship. Of course, if the elements are covered or in a box, Dooley has no way of knowing what they are—he just wants to get on with flunking another starship.

But this could make for a nervous player character.

At each department visited, have the player characters roll on the Preparation for Inspection Table, with a -40, and grade accordingly.

When Dooley gets to the gallery and meets Cookie, he becomes pleasant for the first time since coming aboard.

If the player characters were able to get Cookie his heating elements, Cookie makes a point of offering the chocolate butternut doughnuts—just the way Dooley liked them. Dooley picks one up and says to the player character, "This looks suspiciously like a bribe." If the player character flounders and can't talk his way out of the accusation, permit him to save against an average of the player character's Luck, Charisma and Carousing.

If this is successful, Dooley requests a personal inspection of the mess manager's office, where he finds the coffee and Irish cream, and decides to suspend the tour for awhile.

RESULTS

The ship passes inspection—marginally (no matter how perfect the department heads get their sections, Dooley can always find flaws). The ship won't be sentenced to orbit in the Oort belt for a month. As soon as Dooley departs, the shore leave watch bill goes into effect.

As the PCs start to congratulate themselves, point out there is still one small problem. Now that Dooley has found a supply of his favorite doughnuts, he will find every excuse to come aboard the starship—and it wouldn't look good to put the crew on leave with discrepancies to clear up.

Maybe it would have been better to sit in the Oort belt after all.

Preparation for Inspection

Roll	Result
05 or less	Outstanding.
06-10	Good, but with minor discrepancies.
11-15	Passing, but with serious discrepancies (to be corrected before the next inspection).
16-30	Will pass once discrepancies are cleared up.
31-99	Cancel all shore leave! Discrepancies to be cleared up ASAP!
00+	Utter failure. Department head relieved of duty.

NPCS

The following section details important nonplayer characters the PCs will encounter in this adventure.

J. Bertram Dooley

Rank: Commodore-supply
Position: Inspector general office-supply corp
Age: 51
Race: Human
Sex: Male
Birthplace: Faulconbridge, New South Wales, Earth
Stats: STR 61, END 50, DEX 62, INT 69, CHA 49, LUC 59, PSI 08
Significant Skills:
 Administration: 95
 Computer Operation: 81
 Value & Estimation: 89
 Negotiation/Diplomacy: 38
 Federation Law: 60
 Streetwise: 15
 Federation Protocol: 45

T. Vick

Rank: Quartermaster first class
Position: Supply Department manager, Starbase 210
Age: 39
Race: Human
Sex: Male
Birthplace: Rigel 12
Stats: STR 59, END 59, INT 52, DEX 63, CHA 57, LUC 96, PSI 17
Significant Skills:

Administration: 25
 Value & Estimation: 37
 Computer Operation: 40
 Streetwise: 49
 Mathematics: 20
 Carousing: 46
 Economics: 30
 Federation Law: 54
 Barter: 60

Cookie

Rank: Chief mess specialist
Position: Mess manager (PCs' starship)
Age: 31

Race: Human

Sex: Male

Birthplace: Brooklyn, Earth

Stats: STR 52, END 58, INT 56, DEX 54, CHA 51, LUC 66, PSI 11

Significant Skills:

Dietary Science (Human): 40
 Dietary Science (Vulcan): 18
 Dietary Science (Caitian): 19
 Meal Preparation: 30
 Administration: 25
 Computer Operation: 20
 Federation Protocol: 35
 Carousing: 25
 First Aid: 20

Culinary Specialties:

Pastries: 43
 Pasta: 36

SUPPLY CORP RANKS

To generate supply branch NPCs, refer to the charts below.

Mess Specialist (Enlisted)

Dietary Science (Human): 30
 Dietary Science: 15 each (choose two races)
 Meal Preparation: 25
 Administration: 15 (petty officer and above)
 Computer Operation: 10
 Federation Protocol: 20
 Carousing: 15
 First Aid: 10
 Culinary Specialty: $([INT+2]+10)3D10+5$ each
 Add D100 skill points to be distributed as desired.

Quartermasters (Enlisted)

Administration: 15
 Value and Estimation: 1D10+10
 Negotiation and Diplomacy: 15
 Computer Operation: 10
 Streetwise: 1D10+15
 Mathematics: 10
 Carousing 2D10+2
 Economics: 10
 Federation Law: 1D10+5
 Barter: 2D10+10
 Add D100 skill points where desired.

Supply Officer

After completing a standard Star Fleet Academy education, when it comes to the branch skill selection, use the following:

Administration: 40
 Computer Operation 30
 Value & Estimation: 25
 Negotiation & Diplomacy: 10
 Federation Law: 25
 Streetwise: 1D10+10
 Federation Protocol: 20

Proceed with officer generation with the exception that supply officers are ineligible for command school. Ω

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SHUTTLE

Terrorists hold a group of colonists captive aboard a hijacked shuttle. The Rangers' Special Action Detachment is the most likely unit to be assigned this mission if it is available; otherwise, the local garrison commander will make do with whoever he has on hand.

The PCs are stationed on Janissary Station at the time, and the scenario begins as they are summoned to their commanders' office to be briefed on the situation.

BRIEFING

The commander (probably Captain Markov, *High Colonies*, page 94) announces that an in-bound personnel shuttle has been seized by a terrorist group, believed to be the Flaming Sword, a group known to be associated with the Band of Humanity (BH). The terrorists have killed the pilot by ejecting him into space without a spacesuit. The terrorists refuse to negotiate with local traffic control or police forces, and the PCs are being placed on alert to undertake a rescue mission. The PCs will take up positions in the shuttle docking bay and prepare for an assault on the shuttle to rescue the hostages, should that be needed. Maps of the shuttle and the docking bay are on hand, and a second shuttle has been set up in an identical bay for rescuers to practice on prior to the actual assault.

The unit intelligence officer, Lieutenant O'Hara, outlines what is known about the Flaming Sword terrorist group: Janissary Station was originally built as Purity Station for the Brotherhood of Purity, founding members of the Band of Humanity, in 2102. Following the Purge War, the station was handed over to the Outstation League in 2174 as part of the band's reparations to the league. The league sold the station to a consortium of mercenary companies in 2176. (Some of its original religious statues and decorations have yet to be replaced, and are occasionally used for target practice.) The Band of Humanity still schemes to recover the station.

After the defeat of the Band of Humanity in the Purge War and the loss of their home station, disaffected elements in the Brotherhood of Purity formed the Flaming Sword, a terrorist organization with goals of striking back at the Outstation League and its allies, and recovering Purity Station for the brotherhood.

While the Flaming Sword's communiqués continue to stress the rhetoric of its cause, the original aims have long since been lost, submerged by an addiction to violence and outrage for its own sake. This explains the group's co-operation with other terrorist organizations, even those run by its sworn enemies. The goal now is simply to terrorize, and members do not really care who or why. It is not known which members of the group are involved, but they are believed to be funded by BH operatives and normally use BH weapons.

The shuttle is carrying a number of pregnant women from the nearby High-G Station. This is an industrial colony in Jupiter orbit which uses unusually rapid rotation to simulate gravities of 1.5G and up. Its primary purpose is providing high-G acclimatization for shuttle crews and other workers who need to venture into Jupiter's atmosphere. The high gravity causes complications in pregnancy and childbirth, so pregnant women are normally transferred to Janissary Station (the nearest normal-gravity station) to reduce the risk to mother and child.

When the hijack took place, the pilot dumped the shuttle's fuel reserve, committing it to dock at Janissary Station with no spare fuel to choose an alternative destination. The terrorists then killed him in a fit of rage.

O'Hara believes the terrorists will drag out the situation as long as possible to embarrass the mercenary companies and gain maximum publicity for their cause. The Rangers are under pressure to solve this problem fast—who's going to hire them for security work if they can't handle a simple hijack on their own turf?

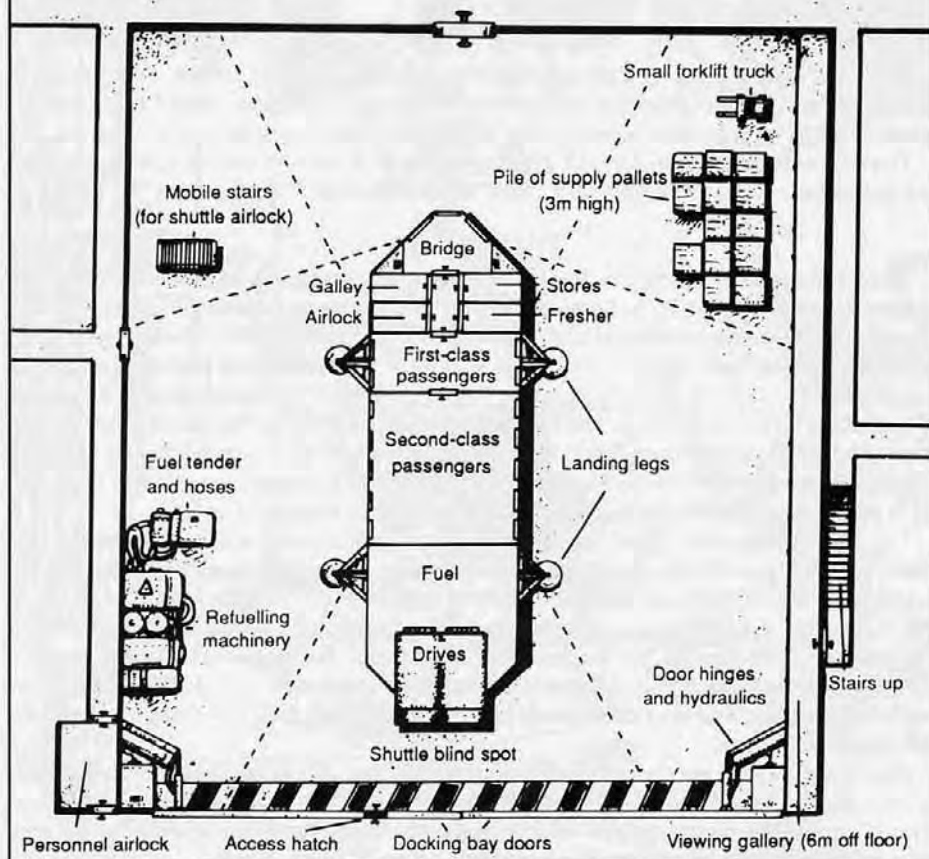
PLAN

The shuttle will arrive and dock in five hours. The PCs have four and a half hours before they take up positions in the shuttle dock, which they can use to equip themselves and make investigations. Fortunately, like all civilian shuttles, the in-bound craft has blind spots—arcs into which neither crew nor passengers can see. These are deliberately included in the design for just such circumstances.

Unless the PCs choose to equip themselves differently, each character on the mission

Article by Andy Slack

Shuttle in Docking Bay



will be armed as follows: heavy cloth armor, metal vest, full helmet and gas mask, auto pistol with spare magazine, machine pistol with four magazines. One or two sniper rifles will be available for those wishing to use them, as will smoke, tear gas and sonic grenades.

The PCs will be backed up by a large number of ordinary soldiers, medical personnel, etc. Their mission is limited to rendering the terrorists ineffective, with minimum casualties among the passengers. Others will follow to deal with everything else.

DOCKING BAY

The map shows the shuttle in the docking bay after it lands. Its position after touchdown is roughly, but not exactly, predictable.

Mobile Stairs: The mobile stairs are a standard internal station van modified to carry a flight of stairs which reach up to the shuttle's airlock to allow passengers and crew to embark and disembark.

Fuel Bowser: The fuel bowser is a standard internal station van modified to carry fuel hoses and connectors. The fuel is stored elsewhere on the station and pumped into the docking bay by the refueling machinery.

The fuel bowser carries a reel of tough hose connecting it to the refueling machinery; fuel is pumped into the bay, then down the hose to the bowser and finally into the shuttle.

HIGH-G STATION

As High-G Station is presumably where the terrorists boarded the shuttle, the PCs may wish to find out more about it. A few minutes of searching and a successful Computer, History or Politics skill roll will reveal the following additional information:

Name: High-G Station

Location: Jupiter GSO

Function: Industry

Population: 3000/2500

League: SFL

Government: Restricted parliamentary

Attitude: Insular

High-G's political parties are the local councils of the three main spacer unions. Other parties are forbidden by the constitution, and only union members can vote in elections.

It was originally intended that staff would serve only short tours of duty on High-G, but over the years, some have become permanent inhabitants.

Attempts to get further information from

High-G Station will run foul of a pompous petty bureaucrat who refuses to give the PCs any help and who is greatly insulted by the suggestion that High-G's antiterrorist precautions have failed.

REFEREE'S NOTES

The leader of the terrorist group aboard the shuttle is Paula Mouton, a well-educated, middle-class young woman. She was originally drawn into the *Flaming Sword* by her infatuation with one of its male founders, who was later killed in a counterterrorist operation by Van Owen's Rangers' Special Action Detachment. Now a hardened, bitter killer, she sees violence as the only way to get what she wants. She is charming and attractive, and infiltrates potential target areas easily. Isolated from normal praise by her covert and violent life, Mouton puts herself under great, and continuous, pressure to prove herself; she strives to outdo her male colleagues in ferocity, and often succeeds.

If she feels she is losing control, Mouton will escalate the situation past the point of no return and may become suicidal.

Mouton and her three followers (two male, one female) should be treated as generic soldiers from page 58 of *High Colonies*. Mouton has donned the shuttle's hard vacc suit as armor; her followers are unarmored. Each has a light pistol and two fragmentation grenades, and Mouton also has the shuttle's flare pistol. One of the terrorists is concealing his identity—as far as the other passengers know, he is one of them. Most of the hostages have been tied to their seats, but they have been told that the undercover terrorist has been left free to act as a waiter.

Clearly, the hijackers are outnumbered and outgunned—the challenge is not dealing with them, but doing so without hostages being hurt.

The 15 passengers are almost all women in the early stages of pregnancy. If their skills and characteristics become important, treat them as a mixture of generic Miners and Traders from *High Colonies*, page 58. The copilot is a generic Pilot from *High Colonies*, page 58. The passengers and copilot are not armed or armored in any way.

NEGOTIATIONS

The PCs will not be taking part in the negotiations, but will be kept informed. Initially, the hijackers will demand the release of other terrorists held prisoner, a broadcast of a propaganda tape on all channels, a large sum of money, refueling and a new pilot. None of these are forthcoming, and negotiations break down.

During the negotiations, the hijackers state that they have rigged an explosive

charge to destroy the shuttle, and they will detonate it if they are attacked or if their demands are not met within 24 hours. (This is actually a bluff, but the PCs have no way of knowing whether there is a bomb aboard.)

After 2D6 hours, the PCs receive the order to assault the shuttle and free the hostages.

RESCUE OPTIONS

The PCs should come up with the assault plan. If they fail to do so, their commander will suggest that the PCs hide inside internal station vans which approach the shuttle under the pretense of delivering food and fuel, then begin the assault when the terrorists open the hatches to receive the food.

If the PCs are having too easy a time, the terrorists may demand that the docking bay be kept open to vacuum. As the shuttle passengers have no vacc suits, this complicates the problem enormously.

Underfloor Access: The PCs may come up with the idea of crawling through maintenance ducts under the floor so as to emerge underneath the shuttle, where they cannot be seen by the terrorists. This requires several hours of work to cut and camouflage hatchways through the deck allowing them to emerge. The shuttle clears the deck by about five feet when grounded. Only a sadistic referee would have the shuttle land on one of the PCs' concealed hatches.

Frame Charges: The PCs may want to blow holes in the shuttle's walls or roof quickly to gain entrance to its interior. This is best done using frame charges, which cost around 1000 EC each and weigh four to five pounds. They take one combat turn to emplace and can be triggered by remote control, timers or a nearby PC. They are precisely tailored to cut a door- or window-sized hole without causing injury or other damage. Such charges are readily available because of their usefulness in gaining access to crashed or disabled spacecraft to rescue the occupants.

Gas: The PCs may try to introduce knock-out gas into the shuttle to incapacitate the passengers and hijackers. This can be done either by drilling small holes and introducing gas pipes into the passenger compartment or by tampering with the shuttle's air supply. The equipment is readily available, and holes can be drilled quietly, provided that the PCs get close enough to the shuttle. Tampering with the shuttle's air supply is best done under cover of refueling and replenishing of the shuttle, but if this is attempted, one of the terrorists will come out to check on whoever is doing the replenishing. That person will need to make a successful Con-Artist roll to avoid being discovered and attacked. If the gas is introduced into the shuttle, each hijacker rolls against Initiative to see if he notices the gas

in time to alert the others and take action. Mouton will seal her vacc suit; the others will open the airlock. High concentrations of gas in confined spaces could harm hostages.

Surveillance: The PCs may try to bug the shuttle with microphones, low-powered lasers bouncing off the windows, TV cameras or whatever. As long as they can get into position to place the equipment, they should succeed. They will learn that there appear to be three hijackers and one passenger (acting as a waiter) and that the copilot and the other passengers are tied to their seats. If the PCs see Mouton, they learn that she is wearing a vacc suit. One hijacker is always on the bridge; the others don't stay long in any one place.

Mobile Stairs: The PCs may approach the shuttle hiding in the mobile stairs, under the pretext of delivering food or other supplies, then charge up the stairs and burst into the shuttle when the hijackers open the airlock. The hijackers will only open the outer door of the airlock, demanding that the supplies be placed in it. They then close the outer door, open the inner one and retrieve the supplies. Smarter PCs will spot this possibility and just use the stairs to get into the shuttle's forward blind spots.

Fuel Bowser: This is a variant of the mobile stairs option. The PCs hide in the fuel bowser as it approaches the shuttle, then steal into the shuttle's blind spots under cover of refueling.

Maintenance Hatch: The PCs can easily get into the shuttle's rear blind spot by spacewalking from the docking bay's personnel airlock and entering the bay proper through the access hatch in the bay doors. This requires a portable, temporary airlock to be emplaced around the access hatch to prevent loss of pressure in the bay. The equipment is readily available and can be emplaced in minutes.

Snipers: A perennial favorite is to put snipers in the viewing gallery or behind the supply pallets to fire on the hijackers through the shuttle windows as the assault begins. These fire at half their usual skill levels because of the obstructions

and the need to avoid hitting passengers.

ASSAULT

When the assault begins, the terrorists are automatically surprised on the first turn. Starting on the second turn, Mouton will turn her flare pistol on the hostages and begin shooting them indiscriminately. One other hijacker will engage the PCs with his light pistol and grenades; the third will drop her weapons and try to hide among the passengers.

The last hijacker—the "waiter"—is caught by surprise, asleep on one of the passenger seats. It will take him three turns to wake up enough to do anything.

When Mouton and the two other terrorists are dealt with, each character should roll 1D100. If the result is less than his Initiative, the character will notice that one of the seated men (the last hijacker) is not tied to his seat like the others. This terrorist will wait for the PCs to get close, then try to arm a grenade with the intent of killing as many as possible of the hostages and troops. The other passengers still think he is one of them and may try to protect him from the rescuers.

If the player characters capture any of the hijackers, they will be imprisoned. Several months later, another group of terrorists will seize more hostages. One of their demands will be the release of the first group. The details of this second rescue are left for the referee. Ω

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Some people have a flair for performing certain tasks. Others are born with an innate understanding of how something works. However you look at it, most people have a gift in a some specific area. This is known as a talent.

DETERMINING TALENTS

Talents are rolled before initial skill placement and should be marked off on the character sheet. Each character may have up to three talents.

To determine if a character has a talent, roll 1D6. A result of 1, 2, or 3 indicates that the character has at least one talent.

Repeat this procedure two more times to determine if the character gets a second or third.

Once you have determined the number of talents that character has, roll 1D100 and consult the Talents Table. If the result is an attribute (any DEX skill, for example), then the rolling player may choose any one skill under that listed attribute. If the same talent is rolled twice, roll again (unless the roll is an attribute, in which case the player can simply pick another skill under that attribute).

Characters who roll Force talents are required to keep them, even if they have no skills in the Force at all. This simply represents an unknown potential which could possibly be tapped one day.

Inheritance: Characters who are offspring of other characters have a 70% probability of inheriting the same gifts possessed by the parents. To see if this occurs, first determine the number of talents the offspring can acquire. Then roll 1D100. If the result is equal to or less than 70, the player may pick one



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talent possessed by either parent, and assign it to the character. Repeat this process until the offspring has run out of talents or if there are no more inherited talents to choose from. If the latter occurs, then simply roll for talents as one would normally do.

Major Characters: Most of the major characters from the *Star Wars* saga would have talents. Han Solo, for example, would probably have a knack for Blaster, Starship Piloting and Con. Darth Vader would definitely have a talent in all three Force skills, as well as Lightsaber and Starship Piloting. Since Luke Skywalker is the son of Vader, he shares his father's abilities.

NPCs: Referees should not hesitate to give talents to nonplayer characters (after all, they're people, too, right?). However, a talent should not replace a character's identity. Rather, it

should help define it to a higher degree, adding more depth to a player's creation.

'Droids: 'Droids can not acquire talents (sorry Artoo!). No matter how lifelike they may seem, 'droids are just technological constructs. Indeed, there is little use for a 'droid to have a talent in the first place since most of its important skills usually start at 6D or above anyway.

EFFECTS OF TALENTS

The effects of acquiring a talent are seen when a character wishes to increase a skill which he has a talent for. The character's skill jumps from one whole die to a die plus two, and then to the next highest whole die.

What this means is that the +1 score is omitted when improving a talent. Characters who have talents at a +1 score should eliminate it and raise it to +2.

For example, suppose a

character with a talent in Blaster wishes to increase his skill from 5D. For a mere 5 skill points, that character can have his skill increased from 5D to 5D+2. To spend another 5 points would increase it to 6D!

Talents

01-02	Any DEX skill	43-44	Starship Gunnery
03-04	Blaster	45-46	Starship Piloting
05-06	Brawling Parry	47-48	Starship Shields
07-08	Dodge	49-50	Any PER skill
09-10	Grenade	51-52	Bargain
11-12	Heavy Weapons	53-54	Command
13-14	Melee Parry	55-56	Con
15-16	Melee	57-58	Gambling
17-18	Any KNO skill	59-60	Hide/Sneak
19-20	Alien Races	61-62	Search
21-22	Bureaucracy	63-64	Any STR skill
23-24	Cultures	65-66	Brawling
25-26	Languages	67-68	Climbing/Jumping
27-28	Planetary Systems	69-70	Lifting
29-30	Streetwise	71-72	Stamina
31-32	Survival	73-74	Swimming
33-34	Technology	75-76	Any TEC skill
35-36	Any MEC skill	77-78	Computer Programming/Repair
37-38	Astrogation	79-80	Demolitions
39-40	Beast Riding	81-82	'Droid Prog./Repair
41-42	Repulsorlift Operation	83-84	Medicine
		85-86	Repulsorlift Repair
		87-88	Security
		89-90	Starship Repair
		91-92	Control
		93-94	Sense
		95-96	Alter
		97-98	All three Force skills (!)
		99-00	Player chooses any one skill Ω

Feedback Results for Challenge 59

A Question of Identity (Twilight: 2000)	3.2
Amber Zones (MegaTraveller)	3.6
Coreward Conspiracy (MegaTraveller)	3.5
Rock 'n' Roll Will Never Die (2300 AD)	2.9
Escape from Dioscuria (Space: 1889)	3.5
Me, Myself and I (GURPS Cyberpunk)	3.5
Opinion	3.2
Cartoon	3.1
Traveller News Service	3.6
Conventions	3.0
Reviews	2.9
Classifieds	3.5
This issue's cover art	4.3
This issue's interior art	3.6
This issue as a whole	3.6

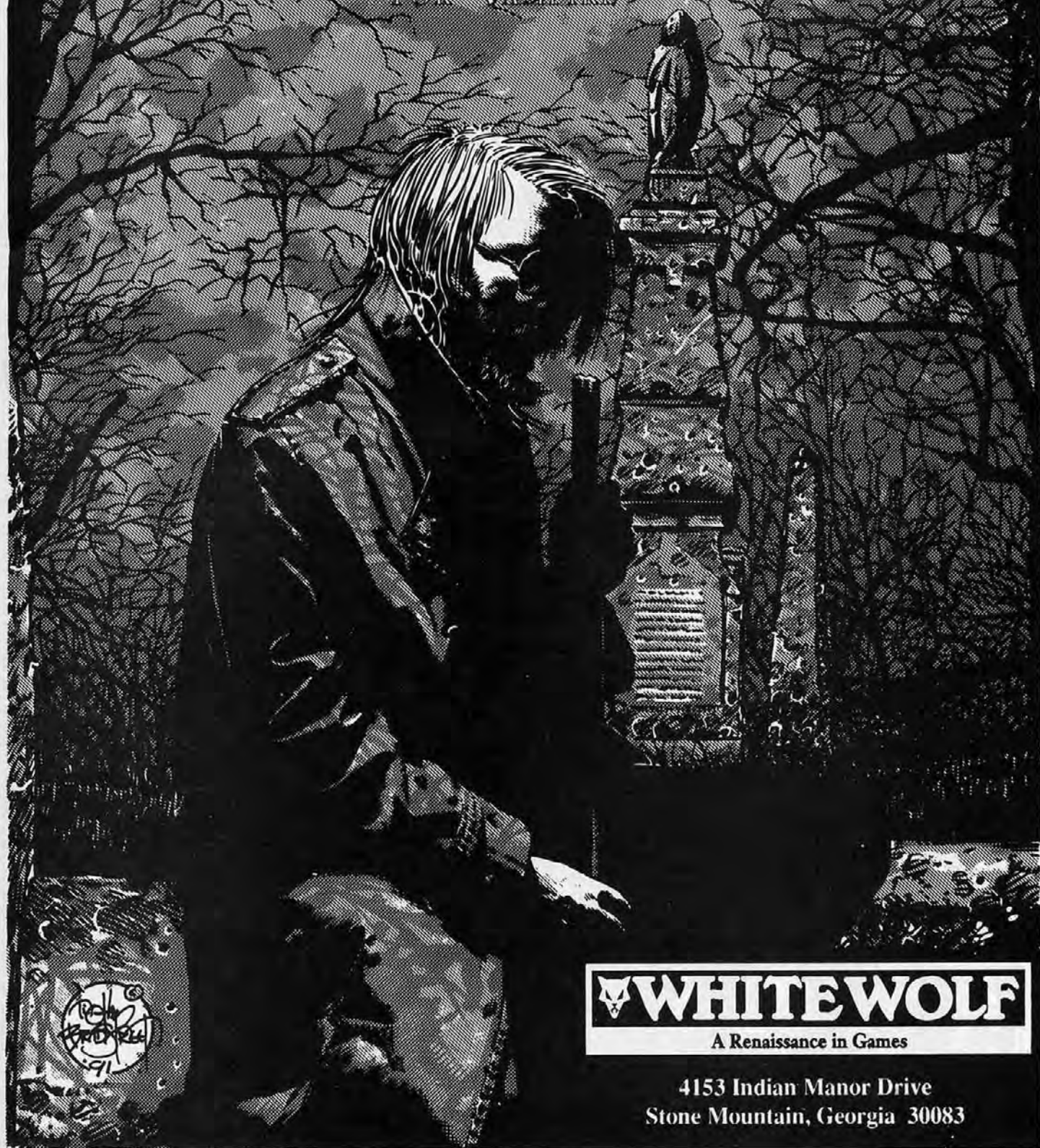
Feedback Results for Challenge 59 1/2

Surprise Party (Merc: 2000)	3.9
I Hate Mondays (Dark Conspiracy)	3.7
Send in the Clowns (Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.)	3.7
Law Enforcers (Shadowrun)	3.8
Last Generation (Star Trek)	3.9
Apocalypse Cow (Ghostbusters International)	3.6
Bughunt (Tales from the Floating Vagabond)	3.3
Opinion	3.6
Traveller News Service	4.0
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OPERATION SWORD BREAKER

By
Christopher King

When Rear Admiral Marcus Wellsius assumed command of Imperial Naval Forces around Höllewelt, he began operations in early 6830 with a plan to shift the balance of power permanently to the TOG side. The assignment of the 23rd *Tyrannus* Maximus Group (TMG) to his command gave him the means, and the blessings of General Spartivalcus gave him the permission. The plan was simple enough: a two-pronged attack aimed at the Commonwealth 888th Battleship Squadron and the Justice Crystal Garden. The attack would draw out the battleship of the 888th Battleship Squadron, which could then be destroyed by the three *Tyrannus*-class cruisers. Even if the battleship survived, the attack on the Crystal Garden would most likely succeed, crippling the main industry of Höllewelt.

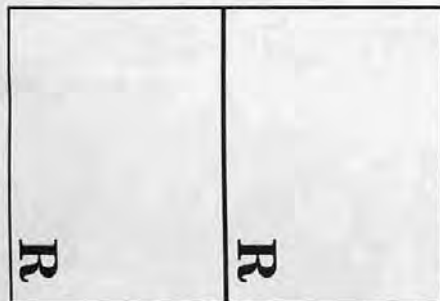
SCENARIO 1

The opening of the engagement found the *Silvermoon Extension*, the 888th's light carrier, on patrol near the planet Alvis. The two *Markanium*-class destroyers of the

23rd TMG, the fighter complements of the other destroyers of the group, and a group of *Arcus* fighters were assigned to neutralize the carrier before the attack on the Crystal Gardens began.

Game Setup

Lay the maps out as illustrated. The Commonwealth player sets up his forces anywhere within five hexes of the left edge of the maps and within three hexes of each other, velocity of 3, Heading 1. The TOG player sets up anywhere within 10 hexes of the right edge of the maps, velocity of 5, Heading 4. Fighters from both sides' ships have been launched and can be set up anywhere within three hexes of their parent ship.



TOG Forces

Elements of 23rd TMG and 1236th Infantry Legion Fighter Wing.

INS Dailey, a *Markanium*-class destroyer.

1 *Spiculum* flight.

INS Mackdon, a *Markanium*-class destroyer.

1 *Pilum* flight.

1 *Gladius* flight.

1 *Idis* flight.

1 *Arcus* group.

Commonwealth Forces

Elements of the 888th Battleship Squadron.

Silvermoon Extension, a *Hornet*-class carrier.

1 *Hawk* group.

2 *Space Gull* flights.

2 *Avenger* squadrons.

1 *Cheetah* squadron.

1 *Penetrator* squadron.

3 *Pegasus*-class corvettes.

Game Length

Combat continues until one side's ships are destroyed or have broken off the engagement by exiting either the top, bottom or left edge of the maps.

Special Rules

The *Extension* and Commonwealth fighters and corvettes must confront the TOG forces for five turns.

On Turn 6, all Commonwealth craft must attempt to disengage by exiting off the top,

bottom or left edge of the maps. Any Commonwealth craft that exit the board on or after Turn 6 are advanced to the next scenario.

The TOG player must attempt to exit the left edge of the maps before Turn 6. Any TOG craft that exits to the left edge before Turn 6 advances to the next scenario.

Victory Conditions

TOG Decisive Victory: The *Extension* is destroyed, and both TOG destroyers exit before Turn 6.

TOG Substantial Victory: Both TOG destroyers exit before Turn 6.

Commonwealth Substantial Victory: Only one TOG destroyer exits before Turn 6.

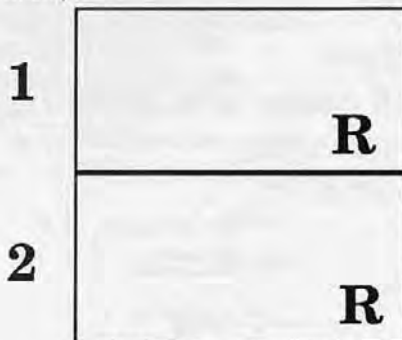
Commonwealth Decisive Victory: Neither TOG destroyer exits before Turn 6, and the *Extension* successfully disengages.

SCENARIO 2

The attack on the *Extension* tied up the carrier in pitched battle near the planet *Alvis*. This allowed two TOG destroyers and a frigate to close with the Crystal Gardens orbiting near the moon *Justice*. The Commonwealth destroyers assigned to protect the installation found themselves outgunned, but with no choice but to throw themselves at the enemy. The only hope for the Royal Navy ships was that the battle between the capital ships of the two squadrons would draw the TOG ships away.

Game Setup

Lay out the maps as illustrated. The *Justice* Crystal Garden is located on hex 1412 of Map 1. All initial Commonwealth forces set up anywhere on Map 1, any velocity of up to maximum, any heading. All initial TOG units set up to the left of hex row 06xx and below hexes xx08 on Map 2, Heading 2, velocity of 5. All fighters have been launched and may be placed within one hex of the parent ship.



TOG Forces

Elements of the 1181st Destroyer Flotilla and 1236th Infantry Legion Fighter Wing.

INS Clausewitz, a *Dochendal*-class destroyer.

1 *Martobarbulus* flight.

INS Schlieffen, a *Dochendal*-class destroyer.

1 *Pilum* flight.

INS Pivotal, a *Falx*-class frigate.

1 *Idis* flight.

1 *Spiculum* flight.

1 *Gladius* group.

Units qualified from first scenario enter on Turn 5.

Commonwealth Forces

Justice Crystal Garden.

Core Armor: 70 per side.

Shields: 1 per side.

Weapons: Destroyer turrets.

2 *Guardian* squadrons.

Dark Star, a *Warrior*-class destroyer.

2 *Cheetah* squadrons.

2 *Kata Cator* squadrons.

Great Barrier, an *Exeter*-class destroyer.

2 *Penetrator* squadrons.

2 *Slingshot* squadrons.

Ivory Coast, an *Exeter*-class destroyer.

1 *Space Gull* flight.

All units qualified from the first scenario enter on Turn 6.

Game Length

Combat continues until one side's ships are destroyed or have broken off the engagement by exiting the map.

Special Rules

The TOG must destroy the Crystal Gardens and exit the board before Turn 8 in order to advance to the next scenario. Any ship that disengages on or before Turn 8 advances to the next scenario.

Any Commonwealth ship that exits before Turn 8 advances to the next scenario.

The TOG ships/fighters that were advanced from the last scenario appear on the left side of the maps on Turn 5, with a velocity of 6.

The Commonwealth units that were advanced from the last scenario appear on the left side of the maps on Turn 6, with a velocity of 6.

Victory Conditions

TOG Decisive Victory: The *Justice* Crystal Garden is destroyed.

TOG Substantial Victory: Only one TOG ship and any Commonwealth ship exits before Turn 8.

Commonwealth Decisive Victory: No TOG unit exits before Turn 8, and the *Justice* Crystal Garden is not destroyed.

SCENARIO 3

The three cruisers of the 23rd Tyrannus Maximus Group were intended as bait to draw the Commonwealth battleship away from defending the Crystal Gardens. The plan was then to destroy the Commonwealth ship with the superior firepower of the three *Tyrannus*-class cruisers. Unfortunately for the TOG ships, the *Victory*, one of

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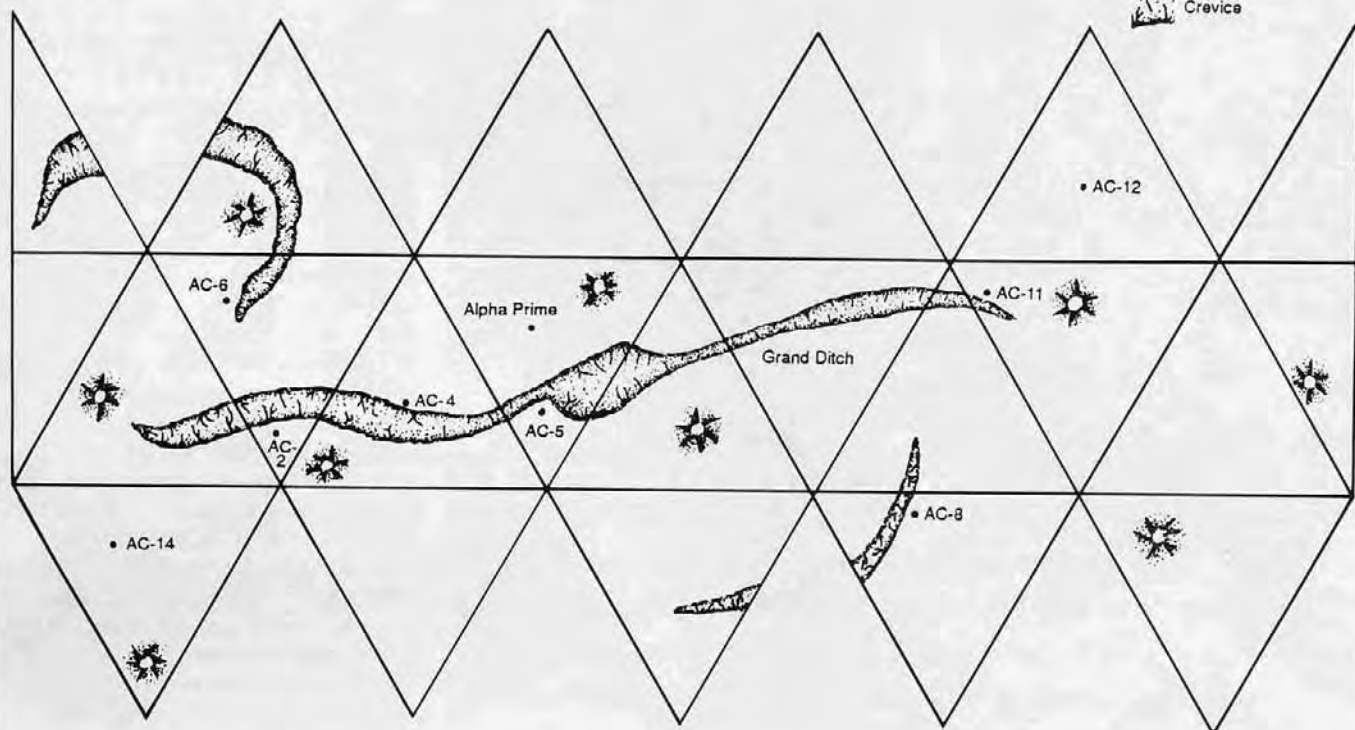
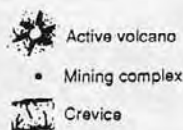
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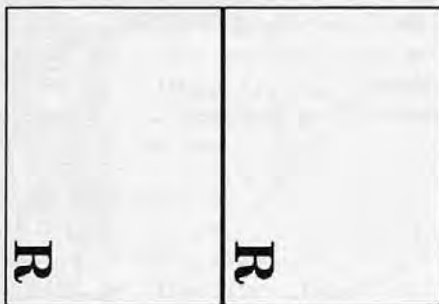
Höllewelt



the new *Venatrix*-class battleships, turned out to be an equal or better match. Soon the TOG cruisers were fighting for their lives.

Game Setup

Lay out the two maps as illustrated. The Commonwealth Forces set up anywhere within five hexes of the right side of the maps and within two hexes of each other. The TOG forces set up anywhere within five hexes of the left side of the maps and within two hexes of each other. Both sides may begin with any heading and any velocity up to 6. All ships have been launched and may be placed within two hexes of the parent ship.



TOG Forces

Elements of the 23rd Tyrannus Maximus Group.

INS Dominant, a *Tyrannus*-class cruiser.
1 *Ictus* flight.

1 *Telum* flight.
2 *Fulman* squadrons.
2 *Lancea* squadrons.

INS Paramount, a *Tyrannus*-class cruiser.

1 *Arcus* flight.
1 *Sica* flight.
2 *Telum* squadrons.
2 *Funda* squadrons.

INS Transcendor, a *Tyrannus*-class cruiser.

1 *Manubalista* flight.
1 *Pilum* flight.
2 *Martiobarbulus* squadrons.
2 *Pilum* squadrons.

INS Dragon Smaug, a *Serpens*-class destroyer.

INS Dragon Tiamat, a *Serpens*-class destroyer.

Units qualified from the second scenario enter on Turn 5.

Commonwealth Forces

Elements of the 888th Battleship Squadron.

Victory, a *Venatrix*-class battleship.
2 *Gaul* flights.
2 *Kenderson* flights.
1 *Fluttering Petal* flight.
2 *Avenger* squadrons.
1 *Punisher* squadron.
1 *Cheetah* squadron.

Ashanti, a *Nalandam*-class cruiser.

1 *Fluttering Petal* squadron.
Insatiable, an *Indomitable*-class frigate.

1 *Corsair* flight.
Invincible, an *Indomitable*-class frigate.
2 *Stinger* squadrons.
2 *Penetrator* squadrons.
Units qualified from the second scenario enter on Turn 5.

Game Length

Combat continues until one side's ships are destroyed or have broken off the engagement by exiting the map.

Special Rules

TOG units that advanced from the last scenario appear on the left side of the map at the beginning of Turn 5. They can have any heading and any velocity up to 6.

Commonwealth units that advanced from the last scenario appear on the right side of the map at the beginning of Turn 5. They can have any heading and any velocity up to 6.

Victory Conditions

Decisive Victory: Destruction of the opponents major warship(s) (either the *Victory* or two of the *Tyrannus*-class cruisers).

Substantial Victory: The destruction of more ship tonnage, fighters included, than the opponent.

Marginal Victory: Forcing the opponent to disengage.

Stars:	Buckley (B6 White Dwarf) Faravashi (B2 Yellow-Orange Main Sequence) (Close Binaries) #K-74-953-905-45-H
Terran Registry:	7 Planets, 2 asteroid belts, 10 major moons
Planetary System:	
#1 (zone 2):	Azusa (2335)
#2 (zone 3):	Flagler (3065)
#3 (zone 4):	Portia (8982) 1 major: Shipley (1945)
#4 (zone 4):	Asteroid belt (6 medium planetoids)
#5 (zone 6):	Robinson (89,653) 25 Moons: 4 major: St. George (1656), Höllewelt (4345) Orbital Period: 29.25 years (for Robinson) Orbital Period: 19.45 days (for Höllewelt) Surface Gravity: 0.34 Rotational Period: 19.34 hours, Mikhailwycz (7914), Justice (2963) 9 medium 12 minor (traceable to asteroidal debris.)
#6 (zone 7):	Asteroid belt
#7 (zone 8):	Alvis (84,436) 35 Moons: 4 major: Kahluah (1673) Smithsohn (2851), Breckinridge (1964), Miamiville (3877) 11 medium 20 minor (traceable to asteroidal debris.)
#8 (zone 9):	Haley (92,895) 34 Moons: 16 medium
#9 (zone 10):	Peary (59,965) 12 Moons: 1 major: Maynard (2751) 11 medium

The parenthetical number following each world and major moon is the diameter in kilometers.

Höllewelt

Population: 2,569,000. Human 46%, Naram 21%, KessRith 7%, Baufrin 24%, Others 2%.

Government: Uni-cameral Parliamentary system with a strong executive office that maintains control over the mining operation and orbiting Crystal Gardens.

Economy: The mainstay of the Höllewelt

economy is the mining and refining of Gennium-Arsenic ore. Several Crystal Gardens orbit around the moons Justice and Mikhailwycz in the Robinson system. Secondary exports include various ores mined in the asteroid belts.

Physical Characteristics: Höllewelt is a rare occurrence—a moon of a gas giant that is capable of supporting life. Located in the second orbit of the gas giant Robinson, the

planetoid is continually pulled by tidal forces of both the gas giant and the larger moon found in the third orbit. The atmosphere contains trace amounts of oxygen and nitrogen, with large amounts of sulfur and other noxious gases. Full space suits are unnecessary in Höllewelt's atmosphere, but breathing apparatus is required for all outside activities.

There is no hydrosphere on the moon, due to the traumatic seismic and geological activities of the planetoid's crust. It is on this constantly changing surface that the right conditions exist for the formation of Gennium-Arsenic crystals.

History: The discovery of large quantities of Gennium-Arsenic deposits on the second moon of a gas giant began the attempts to colonize and exploit these valuable resources. The Mitashi system was uninhabited during the Snow Plague and subsequent KessRith domination of Bannor County. It was not until after the Commonwealth was founded that a survey team discovered the ideal conditions for Gennium-Arsenic on a small moon orbiting the system's second largest gas giant. The trace atmosphere was considered a nuisance, but not a serious obstacle to colonization.

No less than three colonies were started and failed in the period between 6594 and 6638. The frequent geographical upheavals and nasty atmospheric conditions made life very hazardous for Human, Naram and Baufrin miners. The fourth attempt finally succeeded with help from large grav generators that help to stabilize the colony's main administration and housing complex.

Life for the miners of Höllewelt is not easy. Fighting against the dangerous elements and geography is difficult. The invasion of the system by TOG naval elements has made everyday mining operations very hard. The TOG navy controls the outer two gas giants and has an advanced base on Flagler, the second planet of the system. The 2984th Imperial Battleship Squadron (the Death Crescent) is a full-strength battleship squadron based on Peary, supported by two destroyer flotillas and a frigate squadron. Recently added to the Höllewelt Imperial Naval elements is the 23rd Tyrannus Maximus Group, a special strike group built around three Tyrannus heavy cruisers. Additionally, the TOG has landed two infantry legions on Flagler.

The Commonwealth Royal Navy has deployed the 215th Battleship Squadron (the Night Life), the 888th Battleship Squadron (the Reign of Victory), two frigate squadrons and a destroyer flotilla to defend the mining operations and Crystal Gardens. The Commonwealth has stationed three Baufrin armored regiments and two marine assault brigades on Höllewelt to discourage any TOG landing attempts. Ω

Notice to Authors

Challenge will no longer provide coverage for any products produced by or licensed to Palladium Books, at the request of Palladium Books.

Correction

The following credit was inadvertently left off of "Ships of the Black War" in **Challenge 60**:

Special thanks to Robert Dean for numerous ship designs.

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CHALLENGE

Mythus review by *Jimmie W. Pursell Jr.*
Total Eclipse and Elven Fire reviews by
Craig Sheeley.

Mythus™

GDW. \$26.00.

Designed by E. Gary Gygax

Edited by Lester Smith

416-page rulebook

Published in July, 1992.

In July, what may be the most revolutionary roleplaying system yet created will hit the shelves. The **Mythus** RPG, the first release in the **Dangerous Journeys™** multigenre roleplaying system, is a fantasy roleplaying game designed for GDW by Gary Gygax, the creator of **Dungeons & Dragons®**. While some aspects of the game may seem familiar, the **Mythus** game is one of the most unique roleplaying systems to appear in the gaming world.

The rules themselves are separated into two parts, the *Mythus Prime* rules and the *Advanced Mythus* rules. Each has distinct, yet similar, rules for character creation, combat and skill resolution. In both rules sets, the Socio-Economic Class, or SEC, is the base value for the character, or Heroic Persona (HP). The SEC determines the HP's choice of Vocations, each of which gives the HP a number of beginning Knowledge/Skill Areas. In addition to the Vocational K/S Areas, each persona also receives universal K/S Areas and personal K/S Areas. The universal Areas are those which every persona possesses, such as *Native Tongue*. The personal Areas are those which the player chooses without regard for Vocation.

One unique aspect of the **Mythus** game is the way characteristics are handled. For those accustomed to Strength, Con, Dex, etc., the **Mythus**

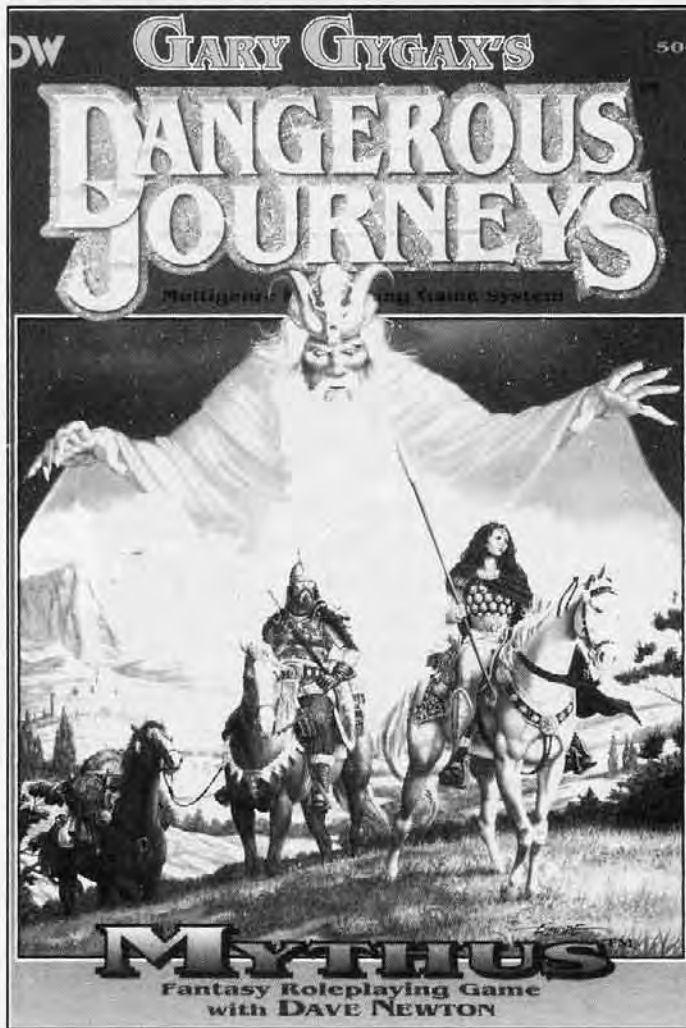
game provides a refreshing change. The **Dangerous Journeys** system uses a three-tier pyramid structure for HP characteristics. The top level consists of three TRAITS: Mental, Physical and Spiritual. These TRAITS represent the sum of the HP's abilities in these areas. Each TRAIT is divided into two CATEGORIES which vary from TRAIT to TRAIT. The Physical TRAIT, for instance, is divided into Muscular and Neural CATEGORIES. The CATEGORIES are further separated into the ATTRIBUTES of Capacity, Power and Speed. The CATEGORY'S Power represents the force with which the CATEGORY can be wielded. Thus, the

Physical Muscular Power ATTRIBUTE effectively measure how much the HP can lift or push. The Speed ATTRIBUTE indicates how fast the CATEGORIES can be employed, such as in running speed. Capacity measures the potential of the CATEGORY and neither of the other two ATTRIBUTES can rise above its level. In addition, the Capacity is generally added to the base STEEP of K/S Areas which are governed by the particular CATEGORY, and thus determines beginning skill levels.

The K/S Areas are rated on a percentile basis; success is determined with a D100 roll. The *Advanced Mythus* rules add the concept of the Difficulty Rating. Each rating is assigned a numerical coefficient, which is multiplied by the K/S rating, or STEEP (Study/Training/Education/Experience/Practice) score, to arrive at the success chance. For example, an "Easy" task has a Difficulty Rating of 3, effectively tripling the success chance. The STEEP score in a *Combat* K/S Area also determines the number of attacks an HP can make. The more skilled the HP, the more attacks he can make. Parries can be substituted for attacks on a one-for-one basis, giving tremendous tactical flexibility to the skilled HP. Systems are also included for lethal and nonlethal hand-to-hand combat, allowing martial artists and oriental characters.

Magick in the **Mythus** world is based on Heka, a magickal energy that powers all Castings. Each Casting requires an expenditure of Heka set by the Casting Grade of the Casting attempted. Additional Heka may be required based on the amount of damage done or, in the case of defensive Castings, protection conveyed. The introductory list of Castings provided will get a campaign off the ground, but the second volume in the series, the **Mythus Magick™** book, provides over one thousand Castings for use with the game system.

As any roleplayer knows, the character constitutes but one part of the gaming experience. To be complete, a roleplaying game must have a world for the characters to adventure in. **Mythus** adventures take place on *Ærth*, an alternate Earth that is hauntingly familiar, yet



startlingly different. The world is a mixture of Renaissance and Medieval cultures, though gunpowder weapons, common during Earth's Renaissance, do not exist. *Ærth* is only touched on in the *Mythus* game, but the third release for the line, the *Epic of Ærth™* companion volume, will detail the world and its peoples.

EVALUATION

For gamemasters interested in sitting down to an evening's play with little preparation, both the *Mythus Prime* and *Advanced Mythus* rules provide detailed introductory adventures. The *Advanced Mythus* adventure is particularly creative and provides opportunities for both action and roleplaying.

The *Mythus* RPG is a fabulous system, creative in its approach. The system is complete and seems to handle with ease anything the player or game-master can throw at it. The skills and combat systems are clear and complete; the rules are detailed but not overly complex or cumbersome. The character generation system creates characters of truly heroic proportions with a wide diversity of skills and fully flushed-out background.

While the basic system provides the core rules, the release of the *Mythus Magick* book and the *Epic of Ærth* volume will make the *Mythus* FRPG a complete, detailed and playable role-playing game. It's sure to be the hottest game this year.

Total Eclipse

FASA Corporation. \$8.00.

Written by William Tracy.

54-page adventure for *Shadowrun*.

Published in 1991.

Since *Total Eclipse* is an adventure, a review can't say too much about it without giving away the plot. Which, of course, accounts for the shortness of the review.

Total Eclipse is a story about what happens when a runner shaman goes bad. Taking a cue from one of the *Shadowrun* novels (a cute tie-in), the adventure opens with a weak, released spirit seeking a cure to its plight. The shadowrunners don't know about this, of course.

(Note to referees wanting to run this adventure: Twilight, the spirit, may put paid to some arrogant and overconfident

characters. He's a nasty cuss.)

The PCs become involved in the background plot in the simplest way—hired to kidnap members of an up-and-coming band and bring them to the employer who paid for the kidnapping. Almost immediately, the adventurers discover that some things are goofy (what, did you think you was gonna get the whole story? Zip-heads!), and their employer has nothing to do with the music business. Indeed, the whole affair turns into an excursion into the Twilight Zone, with a surprise ending that I can't give away without ruining the adventure.

EVALUATION

Actually, *Total Eclipse* is a fairly straightforward, easy adventure to play and run. There's really not much to it, since the action is divided into running down the band members (in four separate encounters), maybe surviving an assassination attempt, and dealing with the nutty shaman and the spirit he's aiding in the climactic gun-battle.

And that's what was disappointing about the adventure. It was too short, too straightforward, requiring minimal thought. Combat monsters should like the adventure, since they don't have to think much (a painful activity for combat monsters—they prefer action to thought). Magicians and thoughtful types will find the adventure's mystery too easy to uncover, and will be ready for that final encounter. The spirit is nasty, but heavy weapons are based on the motto: "If it exists on this plane, we can blow it up!" And this is no exception.

Not a bad little scenario. But if you want a good *Shadowrun* adventure that has something for every kind of player, don't look to *Total Eclipse*.

Elven Fire

FASA Corporation. \$8.00.

Written by Tom Dowd and James Reichstadt.

70-page adventure for *Shadowrun*.

Published in 1991.

Elven Fire is a pretty good adventure for *Shadowrun*. It has some classic elements—intrigue, political infighting, psychotic cybernetic killers, gang warfare, an honest cop, blood in the streets, car chases, drive-by shooting. A good time to be had by all!

As usual, a product review can reveal

no secret details about the adventure, lest it be spoiled. What can be said is this: Something really nasty is brewing. One of the oldest Elf gangs in Seattle has gotten involved in some sort of internecine warfare, and apparently random war code-named "Elven Fire" has broken out.

The other gangs of Seattle have decided to step in and do some destruction themselves. The upshot? A citywide gang war is on the way. And one honest cop needs the PCs to find out what's going on and stop it before the war triggers off in full.

There is some detective work to be done, and the real motive and instigator behind the situation should surprise the PCs as they struggle through a mess of misinformation and random (and not-so-random) violence. Be warned—more than guns will be needed to stop this approaching gang war, but if you don't have guns, you're in trouble.

EVALUATION

I was pleased with the fact that this adventure gets the player characters involved without the *Shadowrun* equivalent of AD&D's "let's meet in a bar" encounter. The adventurers are in it before they have any information at all, as the random violence heralding the gang war reaches out and touches them.

The investigation section of this adventure is fairly simple, as mysteries go. But the very existence of an interactive mystery sets this adventure apart from most of the "break in and steal the (blank)" adventures which FASA seems to love.

And the situation's just desperate enough to goad the players into swift action. Hope they have DocWagon coverage.

I particularly appreciate the less-structured format of the adventure. A lot of *Shadowrun* adventures are so rigidly sequential that the characters might as well be on a train—unless they bail out, they're going where the adventure takes them.

Here, they have the option of going where they want, finding out what they need to as they want to.

My only disappointment is that I can't really find anything with this adventure to point out as a down side. Even the art is good.

Shadowrun referees, here's a good, inexpensive adventure for you that will provide lots of fun and repercussions for a long time after the adventure is over. Ω

CHALLENGE Classifieds

Challenge Classifieds, Managing Editor, Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646

Classified Ads

Challenge accepts all gaming-related classified ads, subject to the amount of space available and good taste. **Challenge** does reserve the right to refuse any ad.

Challenge will not be held liable for errors occurring in advertisements. If you find an error in your ad, please send a corrected version to **Challenge**.

Classified ads are free, and run for at least one issue, longer as space permits. Any reasonable length is accepted, but all ads are subject to editing. Please type ads.

Display Ads

Write to receive our rate card.

PLAYERS WANTED

Shadowrun players wanted in Houston area. Please contact Austin Govella, 10015 Cane Creek, Houston, TX 77070. (63)

NEED PLAYERS of Dark Conspiracy, Cyberpunk or any Palladium game (*Rifts* is okay but hard to run). Have experienced GM. Write to Nick Christenson, 2191 Spinning Wheel, Cincinnati, OH 45244. (61)

CAR-PGA Inc., a nonprofit organization, is looking for dedicated gamers who want to advance the hobby through positive public awareness and defense from censorship. To join or to receive free informative literature, write to CAR-PGA, 111 E. 5th, Bonham, TX 75418. Please enclose 52¢ postage. (61)

PLAYERS WANTED for a *Living Steel* play-by-mail game. Swords and Alpha team members are needed to secure a base of power on the planet Rhind. For information, please send a SASE to David Peters, 5422 Pine Glen Road, La Crescenta, CA 91214. (60)

GAMING VIA ELECTRONIC BBS under way and seeking players—SF game and fantasy game. Will start more games if GMs volunteer. Call SKYLAND BBS in Asheville, NC at (704) 254-7800 2400-8-N-1 anytime. Log on as yourself (no handles), explore the BBS,

check out the games running. Free. (59)

I AM STARTING a *Talisman* PBM. If you are interested in a unique fantasy PBM set after a cataclysmic war of magic, contact Matt Johnson, 625 W. Malvern, Fullerton, CA 92632. (59)

BATTLETECH player looking for worthy opponents in the San Francisco Peninsula area. Interested parties please write to J. M. Hiatt, 832 N. Humboldt St. #1, San Mateo, CA 94401-1439. (58)

ATTENTION RENEGADE LEGIONNAIRES! Playtesters needed for scenarios in any or all *Renegade Legion* game systems. This is real playtesting! I will send scenarios and a questionnaire to fill out and send back. Criticism and suggestions are welcome. If your group is running out of scenarios to play, this is perfect for you. For more information, contact Christopher King, Box MWC-1847, 1701 College Ave., Fredericksburg, VA 22401-4666. (56)

VAMPIRE HUNTERS, this is the PBM for you! I am starting a *Rifts Vampires* PBM. Contact me for information and special custom character sheet. Matthew Johnson, 625 W. Malvern Ave., Fullerton, CA 92632. (56)

STATE COORDINATORS and local representatives wanted for the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games. Send a SASE to CAR-PGA International HQ, Attn: W. A. Flatt, Chair, 8032 Locust Ave., Miller, IN 46403. (56)

HISTORY OF THE IMPERIUM WORKING GROUP (HIWG) is a *Traveller* club spanning from Australia to Finland, active in *Traveller* development. Members receive the bimonthly *Tiffany Star* newsletter. Write to Ed Edwards, 1410 E. Boyd, Norman, OK 73071. (54)

WRITER would like to contact players and designers for history of the hobby. Older players, second-generation gamers and women are of particular interest. Write to J. Cambias, 18 George-

town Ct., Durham, NC 27705. (54)

SHADOWRUNPLAYERS wanted in Tempe/Scottsdale, AZ area. Peter Wimmer, 2646 Champlain Ave., Tempe, AZ 85281. (54)

COMBINED ARMS/COMMAND DECISION group looking for University of Florida, SFCC and any others interested in an extended miniatures campaign. Contact Harold Medicus, PO Box 936, Micanopy, FL 32667. (54)

BATTLETECH 'MechWarrior: Reports of our death have been greatly exaggerated! Samos' Swordsmen, formerly the Federated-Commonwealth 472nd RCT, is seeking any new sibko which is ready for a Trial of Position. Those who survive the training course will be invited to participate in our Cerberus Campaign in the Outworlds Alliance. Are you Star Commander material? Seyla! Anyone interested in a long-running, experienced role-playing campaign should contact Swordsmen Recruiting Command, c/o Khan Gunther Bellows, Route 2, Box 157, Micanopy, FL 32667. (54)

FOR SALE

MOVING—Need to get rid of the games I no longer play. *Shadowrun*, *Space: 1889*, *GURPS* (hard cover), *Paranoia*, *Boot Hill* (old), *Runequest* (old), *Sky Galleons*, *Car Wars* (deluxe), *Car Wars Tanks*, *Autoduel Champions*, *2300 AD*, lots of supplements and more, plus magazines and comics. Send SASE for list. David Farnell, 2327 Deadwood, Austin, TX 78744-2804. (62)

USED RPGs for sale or trade. Contact Eric Nelson, 2401 W. Broadway #1107, Columbia, MO 65203. (62)

VINTAGE TRAVELLER ITEMS, wide magazine selection: *Space Gamer*, *S&T*, *F&M*. Diverse mint game collection must go: civil war, roleplaying, science fiction, *AD&D*, *WWII-III*. Priced to sell. For list, write to Andrew Pierce,

7825 SW 57th Ave., Apt. C, Miami, FL 33143. (61)

MARTIAN METALS 15mm miniatures for *Traveller*, all in original blister packets. K'kree, Zhodani, Sword Worlds, Darrian, Citizens, Patrons, Striker Force, Air/Raft, etc. For list, send SASE to Paul Sanders, 612 S. Patton Ct., Denver, CO 80219. (61)

LARGE COLLECTION of used games in good condition: SF, *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Cyberpunk* and *GURPS* games, and some out-of-print TSR products. Contact Matt Johnson, 625 W. Malvern, Fullerton, CA 92632. (59)

ITEMS FOR TRAVELLER, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Twilight: 2000*, *2300 AD*. Also a number of non-RPGs. All in good condition and at cheap prices. All must go before my wife burns them. Send SASE to Fred Kiesche, 123 Rachel Court, Franklin Park, NJ 08823. (57)

TRADE

TRAVELLER information exchange. I wish to trade photocopies of out-of-print *Traveller* books, supplements, adventures, fanzines, articles, etc. Please send a list to Larry Davis, H-8 Casa Grande Dr., Liverpool, NY 13090. (61)

GDW'S Rebellion Sourcebook (MegaTraveller) or ICE's *Space-master* modules or sourcebooks. I will trade for *Twilight: 2000* material (first and second editions) or TSR's *Top Secret* game material. Contact Kurt Searfoss, 708c NE Ball Drive, Lees Summit, MO 64063. (57)

KALISZ TOWN-GUIDE with map (original in Polish). I will trade for a fair copy of *Black Madonna*. Arne Rassek, Berliner Str. 23, 3005 Hemmingen 1, Germany. (56)

WANTED

HELP! While I was away, all my

original **Traveller** was stolen. I desperately need photocopies of everything by GDW and Digest Group except **Book 4**, **76 Patrons**, **Grand Survey** and **Grand Census**. Anything readable okay. Will pay expenses, if necessary, but outright altruism also appreciated. Also would like copies of all **Traveller News Service** bits except those in **Journal 26-28** and **Challenge 54+**. John R. Barton, c/o Katrina Reef, 900 S. Baker St., Unit 2220, Linfield College, McMinnville, OR 97128. (63)

LOOKING FOR the **BattleTech** novels *Mercenary's Star* and *The Sword and the Stars*, published by FASA. Will pay any reasonable price for a complete copy of either. Michael Gray, 1909 Winterset Parkway, Marietta, GA 30067. (63)

SHADOWRUNNERS or cyberpunks wanted to send ideas on new cyberwear, weapons, spells, vehicles and other gear. Particularly wanted are programs and gear specifically for the decker or netrunner character class, plus scenario ideas for the Houston and Texas locales. Will trade ideas. Send ideas to Austin Govella, 10015 Cane Creek, Houston, TX 77070. (63)

SUPERIOR STARSHIP MODELS. Any types, painted or unpainted. Also looking for Superior catalog with photos/drawings of the starships they produced. Jed Docherty, 400 Grant Ave., Highland Park, NJ 08904. (62)

A COPY OF FGU's *Bunnies and Burrows* and/or a boardgame titled *Christians and Lions*. Willing to buy or trade for this material. Eric Nelson, 2401 W. Broadway #1107, Columbia, MO 65203. (62)

STILL SEEKING *Security Leak* and *Third Imperium* fanzines. Originals or photocopies. Willing to pay all copy and postage costs, or trade for other materials. Contact Richard Artis, 151 G. Meadow Place, Hope, IN 47246-9441. (61)

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK RPG and all adventures. Willing to pay reasonable price. Contact Patrick Morgan, 3905 Northern Lights Drive, Pocatello, ID 83201-5934. (61)

ANY PROFESSIONAL or personal work, article, background, etc. dealing with *Star Trek's* Vulcans or any similar pacifist/ logical/scientifically advanced race in any science-fiction RPG (Transhumans, etc.) Please write

to Jean-Francois Virey, 17 rue St. Andre, 59800 Lille, France. (61)

ANY AND ALL FGU *Space Opera* supplements/modules, including the following star sector atlas/ sourcebooks: *The Galactic Peoples Republic*, *The Hiss*, *The Sikozant Belt*. I will buy or pay for photocopies. Contact M. Yount, PO Box 1744, Corbin, KY 40701. (61)

LASERBURN rules, scenarios, miniatures. Send any information to Paul Sanders, 612 S. Patton Ct., Denver, CO 80219. (61)

TRAVELLERS' DIGEST 6, 7, 11, 12 and 14; **Alien Module 8: Darrians**; **101 Robots**. In good to mint condition. Send information to Jeff Wharton, 2115 1/2 Schaefer, Saginaw, MI 48602. (61-63 only)

BRITISH BATTLETECH fans who have copies of *MekTek* issues 4 and up. Willing to swap for purchase. Please contact Michael Bolda, 1183 Violet St., Atlantic Beach, FL 32233. (59)

CLASSIC TRAVELLER material. *Vanguard Reaches*, *The Beyond* and *SORAG* by Paranoia Press, and *Glimmerdrift Reaches* and *Ley Sector* by Judges Guild. Would also like any issues of the **Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society**. Prefer originals but good photocopies okay. Please send list, prices and condition of items to David Feltmeyer, 7535 Dale Ave., St. Louis, MO 63117. (58)

CHALLENGE 32, 35 and 38 (*Star Wars* material). Will pay decent price for either photocopy or original. Write to Kurt Searfoss, 708c NE Ball Drive, Lees Summit, MO 64063. (57)

ISSUES 1 AND 4 of the **Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society**, and issue 1 of *High Passage*, either originals or photocopies. Send details to Mark Clark, 598 Thompson Station Road, Newark, DE 19711-7520. (56/53)

COPY OF THE *Near Star List* (all pages) from **2300 AD**. Also *Atlas of the Imperium* and *MegaTraveller Journal 1*. Will pay reasonable price or trade *MTJ 2*, *MT World Builders' Handbook* or copies of articles from **JTAS** (5-24) or **Challenge** (25+). David Johnson, 11150 Beamer Road #291, Houston, TX. (56)

CYBERPUNK, *BattleTech* or *Shadowrun* sets for individuals who are incarcerated. Funds are extremely low, so payment may not be possible. If you are willing

to donate any of the above starting sets, please send them to Benjamin Donovan, #882123, Indiana State Farm, 1500 West US 40, Greencastle, IN 46135-9275. (56)

PARTICIPANTS for a *Shadowrun*, *Cyberpunk*, etc. APazine. Please write for information to Niko Wieleba, PO Box 10097, Glendale, CA 91209-0097. (56/51)

LOOKING FOR THE GAME (or supplement) which features Larry Niven's *Ringworld*. I can remember seeing the cover in 1985. If you know where I can find it—or, better yet, have a copy—please contact me. Benjamin J. Rogers, 902 Fulton Ave., Hannibal, MO 63401. (54)

FANZINES

HORROR GAMING APAZINE seeks participants. Focus will be on *Dark Conspiracy*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Vampire* and *Chill*. Fiction and other games accepted. For more information, please write to Dan Snuffin, TESC Building D, Room 114D, Olympia, WA 98505. (63)

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITANNIC TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY, a newsletter dedicated to the **Space: 1889** RPG, is seeking art and article submissions relating to Victorian SF adventure. For submission guidelines, please send SASE to *The Journal of the Britannic Technological Society*, c/o Dragonshead Gaming Concepts Ltd., 21W127 Tee Lane #3, Itasca, IL 60143. (63)

MELBOURNE TIMES: Newsletter of the Earth Colonies Development League provides background material for completely new, non-Imperium campaign setting. Features include news service, world briefs, character sketches, sophont descriptions, corporate portfolios, political analysis, cultural events and more. Subscribers and contributors send SASE to *Melbourne Times*, c/o David Johnson, 2800 NASA Road One #514, Seabrook, TX 77586. Overseas include three IRCs. (62)

MOTIVE: An Amateur Press Alliance (APA) which covers all aspects of the RPG hobby, is looking for new members. Members contribute to and receive a (+/-) 200-page, bimonthly APA. RPGs most often covered are *MERP*, *HERO System*, *Twilight: 2000*,

CoC, *Shadowrun* and *BattleTech*. Please write to Wayne Peacock, 190 Reed St., Athens, GA 30605. (60)

THE SWORD & BLASTER: A new publication detailing games and groups in the Atlanta, GA area, is now available. Covers all aspects of roleplaying and boardgames, including reviews, poetry, game schedules, group contacts and more. For information, please contact Jeff Leggett, 2102-B Wexford Dr., Norcross, GA 30071. (60)

ETHER ILLUSTRATED NEWS: A **Space: 1889** newsletter. For additional information, please contact Tom Gray, 101 Hackberry, Apt. 1503, Clute, TX 77531. (59)

INQUISITOR: *Warhammer 40K* newsletter/forum for experienced players. Eq./vehicle design, open forum, scenarios, Q&A, army calc. worksheets, unit stat cards and more! *Inquisitor*, PO Box 14485, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-6485. (58)

GALACTIC ANARCHY: A PBM game of exploration and conquest set after a protracted civil war. Two to 30 players vie for control of the universe, with up to 70 artifacts, 700 systems and 1000 fleets in one game. Write to Anarchy By Mail, PO Box 873, Allen, TX 75002. (57)

TRANSACTIONS of the Royal Martian Geographical Society: A quarterly publication devoted to roleplaying in the Victorian age, with a primary emphasis on the game **Space: 1889**. Each 20-page issue features several adventures, detailed descriptions of NPCs and equipment, and background articles on late-19th-century history and culture. Please send a SASE to *TRMGs*, c/o Mark Clark, 598 Thompson Station Road, Newark, DE 19711-7520. (56/53)

SS&V (*Starships, Starports & Vehicles*): A fanzine that covers the areas listed for *MegaTraveller*. It includes one article, with the rest devoted to designs. *AR* (*Alien Realms*) is a quarterly fanzine covering aliens in *MegaTraveller*. Currently, two issues are available. Write to Bryan Borich, 3890 50th St., San Diego, CA 92105-3005. (53)

I WISH TO ESTABLISH a fanzine dedicated to *Warhammer* fantasy roleplaying enthusiasts. Interested parties should reply to Rick Taylor, c/o *Der Chroniken Kaiserlich*, 916 S. Booker, Little Rock, AR 72204. (53)

Challenge 63

Rate each article from 0 to 5. 0 means you did not read the article. 1 indicates great dissatisfaction, and 5 indicates great satisfaction. 2, 3 and 4 are shades in between.

To use a separate sheet, list each article number, then your rating.

Send responses to: **Challenge Feedback**, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.

	-	+	
	0	1	2
Article			
1. Dark Angel (Merc: 2000)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3. Silent Wings (MegaTraveller)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Congratulations to William Dover of Butner, NC, and Michael Bolda of Atlantic Beach, FL, who each won a copy of Dark Conspiracy for sending in the feedback for issue 59 & 59 1/2, respectively; and to Bowden L. Palmer III of Jackson, MS, who won a one-year Challenge subscription for being the first to return the 59 1/2 feedback with "I love Challenge" written across the top.

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Don't miss **Challenge 64**, featuring the long-awaited **Traveller** insert, available in September

TWILIGHT: 2000

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1889

Krolik Run: Light relief for a serious campaign. *By Andy Slack*

2300 AD

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Limping Lady: Must sell today! Stock light freighter. Inquire within. *By Peter M. Schweighofer*

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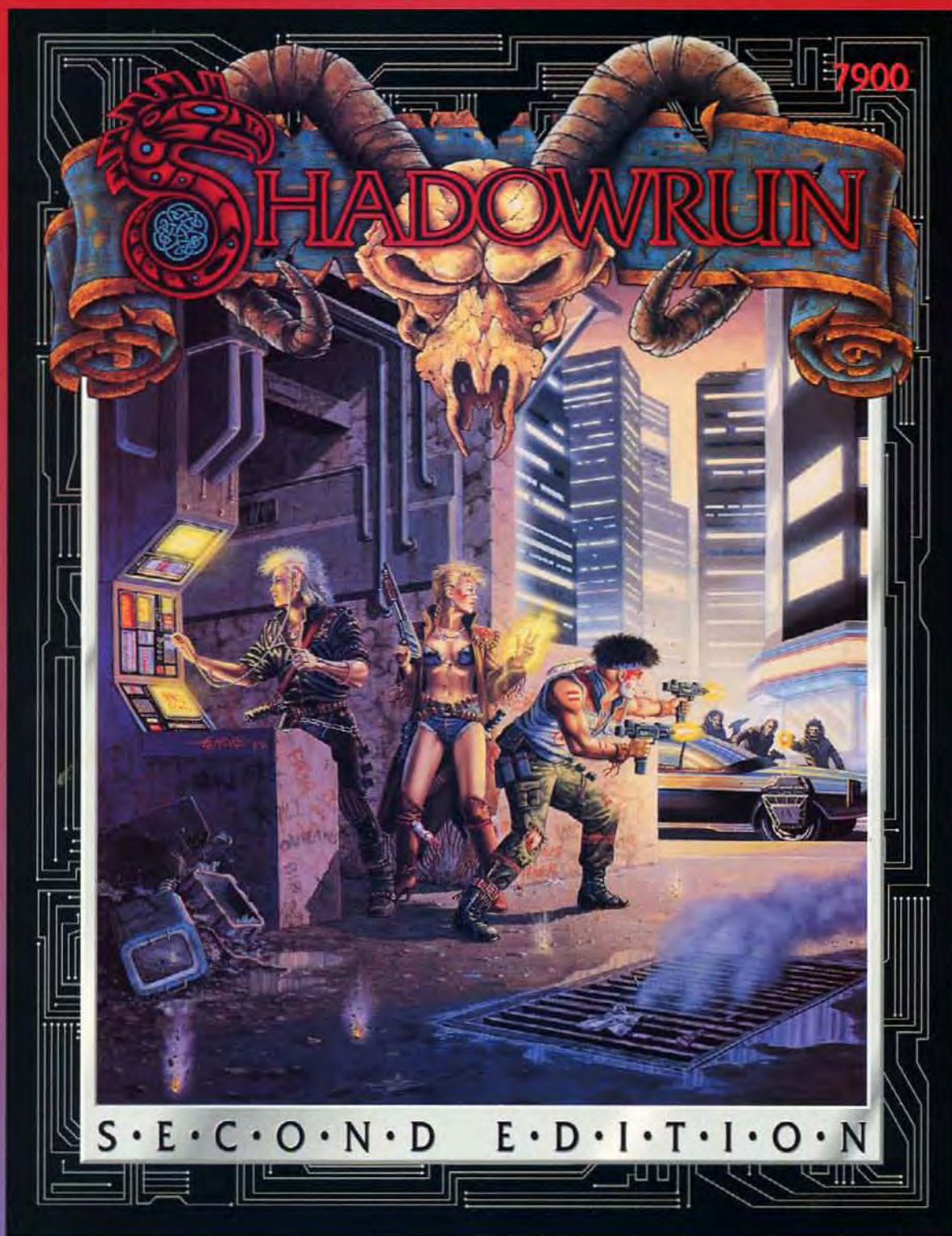
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